

The Doctrine
of the Person and Work of Christ
in Horace Bushnell's Theology

by

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PREFACE

"No full and connected account of Dr. Bushnell's work as a theologian has yet been made" writes Theodore T. Munger in the preface to his book, 'Horace Bushnell Preacher and Theologian'. Bearing in mind the great variety of themes discussed under that title, it may be respectfully claimed that even in Dr. Munger's book 'no full and connected account of Bushnell's doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ has yet been made'. This thesis is an attempt to give such an account.

The doctrine of the person and work of Christ is at the heart of Bushnell's theology. No doubt, this subject is central in the work of most theologians; but especially is this true in the case of Horace Bushnell. The theme attracted him early in life; his interest in it never waned; and at all times it claimed his best thought.

The material in Bushnell's writings bearing on the subject of the work of Christ is more extensive and more important than that on the person of Christ; accordingly in this treatise the space given to the treatment of the former is considerably greater. Although his treatment of the person and of the work of Christ have been dealt with in separate sections, these have been related wherever this has been found feasible, for in Bushnell's thought these subjects are very closely connected.

In expounding Bushnell's teaching, stress has been laid, as far as possible, on the development of his views. On all subjects connected with the person and work of Christ his writings reveal a gradual change in his point of view. Especially is this true in his treatment of the Trinity and of the Atonement. This is an aspect of Bushnell's thought which has not received the attention it deserves from students of his theology; this study, moreover, is all the more profitable in view of the fact that the opportunity seldom occurs of studying the gradual development of an author's theological ideas on such an extensive scale, and yet within such a prescribed limit.

An attempt has been made to give systematic form to Bushnell's teaching, but too much need not be expected, for Bushnell himself preferred that his work should be more suggestive than systematic. While the purpose of this thesis is mainly expository, criticism, both favourable and unfavourable, has been brought to bear at many points; but this too, of necessity, has been more suggestive than systematic.

D. N. M.

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CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF BUSHNELL

The life of Bushnell has already been ably written from two different points of view. The more complete volume by his daughter - 'Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell' - describes him as he was most intimately known to his own family. The other, by T. T. Munger, describes him as the theologian and religious leader. This chapter is not written with the intention of adding anything to the biographical material in these books; it is only meant to be a summary of that material in order that some idea may be had of the man whose theology is being considered. Bushnell's preaching is one of the best examples of "truth through personality", and his theology, to a degree greater than that of most theologians, must be understood against the background of his own attractive personality. In this chapter, prominence will be given to those things in Bushnell's life which throw light on his teaching on the subject of the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ.

(a) Birth and early environment

Horace Bushnell, the eldest child of Ensign Bushnell and Dortha Bishop, was born on April 14th, 1802, near Litchfield, Connecticut. To have been born there, was in itself

a good omen, for the state, in its brief history, had already given a number of theologians to the world.¹ On both sides, his family was of good New England stock. The Bushnells were among the first settlers of his native district. It is difficult to trace the lineage in England but the family was probably of Huguenot descent. Certainly, the best traditions of that blood were maintained by successive generations of the family in New England.

Ensign Bushnell, the father of Horace, inherited an interest in a wool-carding and cloth dressing business; and when Horace was three years old, he and his parents moved to New Preston, a few miles from his birth place. That industrious habits were also inherited is evident from the fact that farming was added to the occupation of the shop. From his earliest years, the eldest son helped in these occupations and no doubt both contributed much to his development, the one bringing him in touch with the lives of his fellow men, and the other keeping him in touch with the rugged but lovely scenery of New England.

In the home, "religion was no occasional and no nominal thing, no irksome restraint nor unwelcome visitor, but a constant atmosphere, a commanding but genial presence".

(p.8)². The springs of this religion were many and varied;

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1. See his own reference in his address 'Historical Estimate of Connecticut' in 'Work and Play'- p.215 (American edition).
 2. The numbers in brackets following quotations in this chapter refer to the page in the 'Life and Letters' volume.

hence, his early religious influences showed that "vein of comprehensiveness" which was to mark his later life. The father belonged to the Methodist Church and the mother to the Episcopal Church. On their removal to New Preston, both became members of the Congregational Church - the only church in the district - and thus the son came under the sway of Calvinism. This variety of religious influence tended to take the edge off the hyper-Calvinism of his day. He was taught the Westminster Catechism but his teachers did not forget that it was never meant to be considered as a standard equal to the Scriptures.

The most important personal influences on Bushnell seem to have been those of three women - his grandmother, his mother and his wife. As in the case of so many of the great theologians, the mother's influence was the greatest. Like Hannah of old, she consecrated her first born son before birth to the service of her Lord. And she saw to it that her children were brought up in the ways of 'Christian Nurture'. A woman of wonderful insight and great common sense, she was discreet enough to lead her children to religion without making it unpleasant to them. She prayed earnestly for and with them; she was "the best Bible teacher in the congregation": and "she was preaching all the time by her maternal sacrifices"; she helped them in their studies and in a thousand other little ways directed them. That the eldest son finally

chose the calling of the ministry was in a large measure due to her. Even when her early hopes seemed likely to be unfulfilled, she never gave up her calm attitude of trust.

While first place is given to the mother, mention must be made of the influence of his paternal grandmother. A woman of strong religious impulses, she seems to have influenced him considerably during the impressionable years. In later years, he wrote of her:

"Though I knew her only in my childhood, and then only on visits twice made of a few days each, she has been almost visibly with me, and going, as it were, through me by a kind of subtle waft, down to the present hour. Whether it is that she made impressions on my childhood by means I do not recall, or whether, by sending me messages and verses of her own composing in the letters to my father, she knit into my feeling the conviction that she had religious expectations for me, felt but not expressed, I do not know. But somehow she has been always with me, and upon me, felt as a silent, subtle operative presence of good". (p.26).

(b) College years

As has been suggested, it was the mother's plan that Horace Bushnell should receive a liberal education in preparation for the ministry. His early education was received in the typical New England school so vividly

described in his address 'The age of Homespun'.¹ It is not surprising that amid such influences the 'sense of power' awoke within him very early. He declined the first offer of a college education but five years later, "when brought distinctly under the motives of religion", he was anxious to have the opportunity and the family, now in less favourable circumstances, agreed to deny themselves in order to provide him with the required means.

In 1823, at the age of twenty-one, Bushnell entered Yale College. His university years were not extraordinary yet he gave distinct promise, leading his class in his studies as well as in athletic sports, and taking a prominent part in the musical society. With the introduction to a new world of ideas, his early religious faith became weakened. Still, he did not lose his grip on the moral things of life and his influence on his fellow students remained a positive one for the right.

No doubt, it was during these years that he learned that industry is "more necessary to advancement in life than genius". (p.61) Or as he puts it elsewhere, application is the real requisite of genius. (p.41) He, himself, was one of those who "study more in their dreams than others by their midnight lamps. (p.62) He determined to know truth "first-hand" which, as T. T. Munger has said, is an incessant

1. See 'Work and Play' - pp.39-76 (London edition)

word with him.¹.

After graduating in 1827, he hesitated a little before finding his life work. After the loss of his religious faith, he felt that he could not conscientiously enter the ministry although he did not inform his mother of this decision. He taught a school for a few months but, finding it uncongenial, he became engaged in newspaper work. Although making a success of the latter, he disliked it and after ten months, he turned to the study of law. At the end of the half year, he left the law school intending to find his way into some law practice but, on receiving an appointment as tutor in Yale College, he was influenced by his mother to accept the position. His duties there were combined with further studies for the bar.

Our interest in his tutorship lies mainly in his relation to the revival which swept the college in 1831. As the periods, in which he passed through deep religious experiences, will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, this event may be passed over here. It may be pointed out, however, that his reconversion at this time was a complete turning about of his life. His doubts were not altogether banished but he had turned in the right direction and he was prepared to go forward making use of

1. Bushnell Centenary - p.36.

the light as it came. Although he had now finished his law training, he decided to enter the Divinity Hall.

In the autumn of that year, at the age of twenty-nine, he began his studies in the Theological School at New Haven. It was regarded as the school of progress in the religious thought of the time but it still contained enough of the older views to make a thoughtful student like Bushnell uncomfortable. Like Ritschl, to whose theology his own is closely akin, Bushnell was trained by gifted professors who repelled him and set him thinking seriously. He objected most to the logical and "mechanical" methods of thought. He himself had discovered the truth of Melancthon's phrase 'the heart makes the theologian'. The germs of some of his later books are easily traced in his theological efforts of these years.

(c) Early years in the ministry

Towards the end of the college year, 1833, he began to teach a Bible class in one of the city churches. One of the members of the class was Mary Apthorp, his future wife. Attracted by this new friendship, he did not seek a congregation although he had been licensed to preach. He returned to New Haven in the autumn and spent the winter in studying and in writing sermons. In February, he received an

invitation to supply the pulpit of the North Church in Hartford for a few weeks. At the end of this engagement, he received an unanimous call, and, on the twenty second of May, he was ordained in the church which was to be the centre of his life work.

In September of the same year, he was married. His wife was a woman of considerable intellectual gifts, of noble and high purposes, and of great spirituality, and she influenced his thought and work in a way far from insignificant. In a letter written to her in later years, he said:

"These blessed communings that I have had with you for so many years, and especially the last ten or fifteen, come across me, every few days, like waves in the memory, and my soul is bathed in their refreshment as by nothing else in the world. it ought to be a very great comfort to you to know that I connect all my best progress in truth and character with your instigations thus received."
(p.447)

The theological situation in his church in Hartford was in some respects typical of that which prevailed in the New England states. The church had its representatives of the Old and New Schools and the young minister was in the delicate position, to use his own words, of being "daintily inserted between an acid and an alkali". (p.69) His honest thinking, however, soon made warm supporters of both sides and his relations with the congregation continued to be

happy to the very end.

From the beginning, his ministry gave evidence of his greatness. The sermon 'Duty not measured by our own ability' was written in the first year. Other early sermons are 'Living to God in small things' and 'Every man's life a plan of God' - sermons which are ranked among his best. Not only was he great at the beginning, but, what is more important, he had the talent for growth - the talent which he considered first among the preaching talents.¹

In 1835, he began a series of papers which raised the opposition that eventually led to the attempt to bring him to trial. The first article on 'Revivals of Religion' was to grow in later years to the book 'Christian Nurture'. In 1839, he gave an address at Andover, in which he "said some things very cautiously in regard to the Trinity" (p.90), and which was the germ of his book 'God in Christ'. Even at this time, he states that he has been thinking a good deal on this subject and feeling that his thought is well developed, he is anxious to "publish the whole truth on these subjects as God has permitted" him to see it. (p.90) Fortunately, he did not publish it till ten years later

1. See 'Pulpit Talent' - p.12.

and even then it was none too mature.

Even in his early years, he was being taught in the school of domestic sorrow. In 1837, an infant daughter died. Again, in 1842, he lost his only son, a child of great promise upon whom he had staked his manly hopes. These griefs drove him further into the realm of the spirit and prepared him for deeper revelations of Christ. He said a year or two later: "I have learned more of experimental religion since my little boy died than in all my life before". (p.105).

(d) Search for health

Bushnell also had to bear personal suffering. In 1839, a trouble of the throat, already felt for a few years, became more serious and caused him many anxious moments. He seems to have been afraid that the trouble would soon settle on his lungs but his worst fears proved to be unfounded until the last years of his life. Almost from middle age till death, however, his life was overshadowed by the disease. In the early years of its progress, it did not make him an invalid nor did it make him relax his work - except for stated periods of rest and travel in search of health - but it left its mark and no doubt helped to turn his attention more and more to the realities of the spiritual world.

The year 1844 was one of those of which his daughter writes: "There were years all through his life when a high tide seemed to set in to every mental inlet, and his work in all directions was great". (p.110)

The long period of toil undermined his health and in February of the next year the long threatened breakdown came. His loyal congregation sent him to Europe at their expense. He travelled widely in England and Scotland and on the continent. He spoke neither German nor French so he did not have the opportunity of coming into direct touch with the fresh streams of continental theological thought. It is certain, however, that travel in such countries as he visited profoundly influenced him. He was particularly impressed with the beauty of the natural scenery, the architecture of the cathedrals, and the paintings in many of the art galleries. Of the latter, he said: "I feel conscious that my eye is forming or perfecting, and I know that it must be a benefit to me, as regards writing and the conduct of life, to have dwelt in such an atmosphere and received such an influence." (p.150)

He spent considerable time in London and found some kindred spirits among its preachers. He felt that his residence there taught him to estimate himself 'with more modesty' for it showed

him what a speck he was in the broad world.

(e) Early publications and heresy charge

The important event of the year 1846 was the publication of the book 'Christian Nurture' - a book that revealed the practical side of the position to which he was leaning in his theology. It increased the suspicions of the theologians who were keenly watching his departures from the accepted standards of the day but in reality it was a return to an older position. In the words of Dr. Leonard Bacon, "It agreed with the theories and the practice of a Calvinism older than the traditions of our New England theology, and was commended accordingly by the most authentic organ of Presbyterian orthodoxy". (pp.182-3)

Early in 1848, "a year of great experiences, great thoughts, great labours," (p.191) he had another deep personal religious experience. As this, too, will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, it is not necessary to dwell on it here beyond pointing out that it was a crisis in his life. The new revelation was soon embodied in a sermon on 'Christ the Form of the Soul',¹ and this in turn was developed into the material of the book 'God in Christ'. Before publication, the opportunity came to deliver his views before the leading schools of theology in his district. It -----
1. This sermon was published in 'The Spirit in Man' 1903.

gave him a chance to speak ad clerum instead of ad populum as a test of his views before he committed them to print. He accepted gladly although he realized that there would be much misunderstanding and criticism. In July, at Cambridge, before the Harvard Unitarian Divinity School, he gave his 'Discourse on the Atonement'; in August, at New Haven, (i.e.) Yale, his discourse on 'The Divinity of Christ'; and in September, at Andover, his address on 'Dogma and Spirit'.

"The days of accusation"¹ followed the publication of the book in 1849. A detailed account of the attempt to prove him a heretic will not be given here for it does not throw much light on the development of Bushnell's thought; some of the points of criticism advanced during the controversy will be considered in later chapters. Before publication, he had made up his mind not to be drawn into reply unless he felt compelled "out of simple duty to the truth, either to surrender or to make important modifications" in his views.² He did, however, read widely on the subjects under debate and in 1850 was led to make an elaborate statement before his Association. A year later, the address in slightly altered form was published under the title 'Christ in Theology'.

1. Bushnell used these words in the dedication of his 'Sermons for the New Life'.

2. God in Christ - p.115.

Note: all references to 'God in Christ' are from the Hartford edition, 1849.

Although his own Association had refused to bring him to trial before the General Association, criticism of his opinions still prevailed in many quarters and it was feared that attempts would be made to stir up trouble within his own church in order to procure the necessary grounds for a trial. To prevent this, his congregation, in 1852, unanimously decided to withdraw from the Consociation - an organization rather unusual to Congregational churches - "the Consociation belonging rather to a Presbyterian than to a Congregational form of Church government, and being peculiar to Connecticut". (p.261) This withdrawal did not bring the controversy to a close but it lessened its importance so that it died out gradually.

Bushnell always loved an intellectual debate and outwardly he did not seem to mind the storm that his writings had caused. But, in reality, his sensitive nature felt very keenly some of the personal criticisms and especially the loss of Christian intercourse with many of his friends. The way in which a reconciliation with these estranged friends was effected throws light on one of his last books - 'Forgiveness and Law'. The germinal ideas of that work must have been formed at this time even though Bushnell did not make use of them for many years.

So far, no description of Bushnell's own person

has been given. The following quotation from the report of a newspaper correspondent in 1851 is interesting for it describes Bushnell at a time when he must have been nearing the height of his mental powers:

"Dr. Bushnell struck me as one of the most intellectual-looking men I had ever seen; I might have added that he is a strikingly handsome man. He is of fine manly stature, delicately but not feebly framed, with a very large head. A line drawn from the roots of his hair over his forehead to the bottom of his chin would be perpendicular. His nose is the Grecian ideal, finely chiselled, and his mouth indicates the utmost refinement, though not remarkable in any other particular. His temperament is nervous-bilious, without a particle of the sanguine or lymphatic perceptible in any feature of his person. He has a good voice, and an unusually good elocution for the pulpit." (p.249)

(f) Retirement from the active ministry

In the next few years, his health became much worse and from 1854 onwards he was not able to take his regular place in the work of his church the year round without long holidays. Still, he refused to give up his studies and during 1855 he worked on material for a new book in the apologetic field. In 1856, he went to California for his health and remained there most of the year spending a considerable share of that time in prospecting for a site for the University of California. The year

1858 saw the publication of his first volume of sermons - 'Sermons for the New Life'. This book won him many friends both among the liberal and the conservative thinking people and it proved a valuable help in introducing his later theological books. 'Nature and the Supernatural', over which he had meditated long, and which had cost him more labour than any other he ever wrote, was also published in 1858 and was well received.

Feeling that he could not do justice to his congregation, he tendered his resignation in 1859 and set off once again in search of health. After a year or more of wandering in his own land, he returned to Hartford to spend the rest of his life in comparative retirement. Although a confirmed invalid, he was by no means a broken man. His vigorous mind prevailed over his ailing body to such an extent that more than half of his books were written after this date. If anything will compel our admiration for the man, surely this will - that he, compelled to retire from the active life he loved so well, spent the years not in self-indulgence which might have been excused, but in strenuous mental and physical labour for the good of his own and future generations. As F. H. Foster has put it in a noble tribute paid to Bushnell

on the centenary of his birth, "For this self-neglecting, and constant loyalty to opportunity, to his vision of truth, and to his Master, those who believe in Christian theology will join in honouring Bushnell, theologian and hero, man of insight and man of faith."¹

It is difficult to say to what extent his prolonged illness affected his theological thought but it was bound to have a subduing effect. There is even a sense in which it may be regarded as a blessing in disguise. As Munger has said, "Without it, he might have been a stormy polemic, lacking in sympathy with an order of men and of things that called for gentle treatment."² There is another bright side to his enforced retirement. The ill-health, which prevented his attending to the pastoral duties which required more physical strength, left him free to use his ever active mind in thinking out the theological problems confronting him. It was only a measure of freedom but it was the kind that a man of his resolution could use. He, himself, was aware of this for he said at the time of his resignation: "I am encouraged in the hope

1. A History of the New England Theology - p.422
 2. Horace Bushnell - p.381.

of being so far recovered in health that I may prosecute, in a careful way, objects and themes of study that appear to me to have no secondary importance." (p.424)

(g) Last years

The chastening and mellowing effect of his physical weakness was more apparent in his last years. Becoming more devout, he turned his attention increasingly to subjects connected with Christ. He began to study the work of Christ from a much wider view point than in his previous attempt. The subject must have occupied his thought for some time but it worked up to a climax in 1861. This was a busy year for him and he rejoiced in his studies - "truly all things are getting new, even Gospel itself among them". (p.449) In this year, he had another of those experiences in which he distinctly felt that he had received fresh light.

He worked much slower than in former years when he wrote and published in haste. Still, the fruit of his "broken industry" is amazing. The volume of sermons, 'Christ and His Salvation', as well as the volume of essays, 'Work and Play', was published in 1864. His studies on his "great subject" - the work of Christ - continued to occupy him and the theme kept growing so that he was "obliged

to recolour, reconstruct, and make all sorts of revisions". (p.479) In 1866, it came from the press under the title 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' and was at once recognized as his most valuable contribution to theology.

During his last years, much of his feeble strength was spent in preparing occasional sermons, writing articles for journals, supervising new editions of his former works, and publishing material already in manuscript such as his third volume of sermons entitled 'Sermons on Living Subjects'. His mind, however, continued to be occupied with the subject, which he loved, and which had so long engaged him. Fresh light had come to him and he spent many hours thinking silently on the theme, although, at times, it also burned in him "as a most welcome fire". In 1874, he gave the results of these studies to the public in his last important volume - 'Forgiveness and Law'.

As usual, he finished one work only to begin another, and during the last two years of his earthly life "his brain teemed with new work". (p.545) He began work on a new subject - 'The Holy Spirit and His work especially as related to inspiration' - but increasing infirmity prevented

him from preparing more than an introduction and an outline of his thought on this theme.¹ His last months were spent in peace with all men and to his most intimate friends seemed to be "almost as much the opening years of the life to come" as the close of this life. (p.515) Death came on the morning of the seventeenth of February 1876.

1. See pp.3-35 in 'The Spirit in Man'.

CHAPTER II

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON HIS THEOLOGY

There is, indeed, a sense in which the life of Bushnell, taken in its totality, tells the story of the formative influences on his theology. At the same time, it must be admitted that there were things in his life which were outstanding in their influence. These could not have been discussed in the previous chapter without breaking up the natural sequence of the narrative; hence, they have been reserved for separate treatment in this chapter.

(a) Theological environment

The second paragraph in the previous chapter began with the date of Horace Bushnell's birth. But what has been said in a Scottish biography is true here: "The exact date on which a man is born is a matter of no importance: the important thing is a man's period".¹ In Bushnell's case, it is even more necessary than usual to take pains to place him in his theological environment. The first impression is that, as he lived far from the German and British theologians, he was isolated from all fresh theological thought. Yet, this is far from being the case.

1. The Life of Principal Rainy -- P. Carnegie Simpson - p.39.

There had been a distinct New England theology long before Bushnell's birth. F. H. Foster begins the introduction to his 'History of the New England Theology' with the statement: "Among the great events of the eighteenth century was the rise, in an obscure corner of the civilized world, of a new school of theology".¹ What is more significant is that this school gave all the breadth of European Protestant thought; for, as Foster points out, "in spite of its apparent and real isolation, the great periods of theological history are repeated here with almost identical dates".²

The history of the New England theology is one of intense activity but also one of bitter antagonism. A general criticism is that it spent its energy far more in putting down error than in building up truth. It was expert in the use of the logical method and this in the end led to a position which proved its downfall. It was a unit inasmuch as its one and only source of thought was English, and as all its discussions arose out of positions that were developments of Calvinism. And, in a sense, Jonathan Edwards' discussion of the will gave it a centrality of theme which also helped to

1. A History of the New England Theology - p.3.

2. Ibid - p.7.

unify its varied treatises.

Jonathan Edwards with his slightly modified Calvinism was the starting point for most of the members of the school - some trying to mend the weakest of his arguments, and others trying to develop what they considered to be his strong positions. To quote an extremely apt illustration by Munger, "They were mending their house, not tearing it down and building anew, and every man had a board, a window, or a door that he thought would conduce to the improvement".¹ There was Bellamy with his theory of "sin as the necessary means to the greatest good"; Hopkins with the idea of "disinterested benevolence" more vividly expressed in the slang phrase "willingness to be damned for the glory of God"; Emmons holding a form of pantheism; the younger Edwards introducing the Grotian theory of the atonement; and Taylor, under whom Bushnell studied, asserting the self-determining power of the will.

By Bushnell's time, the movement had reached a stage which Munger considers best described "not as a decadent but as a critical period".² Less essential matters of faith had been over-emphasized to the neglect of vital ones. Endless discussions about the human will and conversion had pushed aside - unconsciously it

1. Bushnell Centenary - p.37

2. Horace Bushnell - p.35.

is true - the deeper question of Christ and His work. When the latter was discussed, it was in terms of a theory that had suffered from logical refinements and commercial ideas, or of a governmental theory which had given little relief.

If the orthodox theologians disagreed among themselves, they also had a common foe. Partly due to the natural reaction against the inhumanity in the teaching of Hopkins and Emmons, the Unitarians had made considerable gains in New England. In Bushnell's day, the controversy was still raging and the Unitarians were an influential part of the community which he knew. It was not a mere matter of chance that the subjects on which he had "fresh light" were those in dispute between the two groups.

It is not surprising, then, that the whole theological situation - past and present - gave Bushnell the impression - to quote his famous description - of

"multitudes of leaders and schools and theologic wars" - "The Supralapsarians, and Sublapsarians; the Arminianizers, and the true Calvinists; the Pelagians and Augustinians; the Tasters, and the Exercisers; Exercisers by Divine Efficiency, and by human Self-Efficiency; the love-to-being-in-general virtue, the willing-to-be-damned virtue, and the love-to-one's-greatest happiness virtue; no ability, all ability, and moral and natural ability distinguished; disciples by the new-creating act of Omnipotence, and by change of the governing purpose; atonement by punishment, and by expression; limited, and general; by imputation, and

without imputation; trinitarians of a threefold distinction, of three psychologic persons, or of three sets of attributes; under a unity of oneness, or of necessary agreement, or of society and deliberative council".¹

It is not to be supposed that much piety did not exist in spite of this theological situation. It so happened that a deep spiritual religion prevailed at this time. There were many people, who knew their Bibles and Shorter Catechisms by heart, who sang the hymns and psalms with fervour, and who listened to sermons which, in spite of their hyper-Calvinism, nourished the spiritual life of the community. However, among the younger minds, who were reading widely and catching a glimpse of a new world of thought, there were many who were thinking seriously on theological matters, and who needed relief from a system once useful but now slowly dying. As Salmond has said, "The Nemesis that dogs the steps of all that aims too high had overtaken it.... the winds that blew from a whole new world of philosophical and scientific ideas which had been opening up were searching it".²

This was the theological environment in which Bushnell found himself and it is against this background that his own theology must be understood. There is some truth in Buckham's statement: "The legacy of the

2. London Quarterly Review, Vol. 5, (New Series,) p.134.
1. Christ in Theology - pp.v-vi.

New England theology gave to Bushnell a heavy task. It left more to reject than to aid, more to halt than to help him".¹ Still, it presented a great challenge to the man who was big enough to be able to meet it. The situation was ripe for a theologian who could view it comprehensively through modern eyes. The old question of whether the age makes the man great, or the man makes the age great, need not be discussed here. A man of Horace Bushnell's ability might have been great in any period; yet, it is certainly true that his age gave him an ideal setting for the part he was to play - especially in relation to his teaching on the subject of the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

(b) Personal religious experiences

In a fragment of autobiography written late in life, Bushnell said: "I have had a great experience". That word 'experience' meant much to him. In his experiences he had been led to see that the spiritual things of faith were the only things that really mattered, and through them direction had been given to his whole life. Perhaps, it is true of all theologians that their theology is an expression of their religious experiences, but it is true in an almost unbelievable degree of him. What he wrote in later life to a friend

might have been said of all his books: "All the 'strong and beautiful things on forgiveness', which you so much admire in my books, were distilled in the alembic of my own experience".¹ There is more than chance in the fact that both he and Ritschl came through intellectual and spiritual struggles to a theology which upheld the Christian life as its norm or source. At any rate, his experiences may be regarded as among the most important formative influences of his life and some knowledge of them is essential in an attempt to understand his theology.

He, himself, noticed a remarkable similarity between his spiritual experiences and those of the 'Fair Saint' as told in Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister'. The one exception was that he had been more of an unbeliever. In one sense, his whole life was his experience; but in another, his vital experiences really came at certain nodal points in his life. In a letter written to his wife, in 1861, he speaks of 'four discoveries' or periods in which he believed that he had been given a special revelation. This reference is, no doubt, responsible for the fact that it has been customary to speak of the four periods mentioned as the four stages in Bushnell's religious pilgrimage. But he had at least two more such ex-

1. Life and Letters - pp. 518-9.

periences after the writing of the letter. These experiences will be considered in their chronological order.

The first occurred while he was still a youth. He had been brought up in 'Christian Nurture' and we should not be surprised if the deepening of his faith had come so gradually that he would have been unable to point to any one period as outstanding. Yet, in a manuscript written when he was nineteen, the following words occur: "A year since, the Lord, in His tender mercy, led me to Jesus. Four months since, in the presence of God and angels and men, I vowed to be the Lord's, in an everlasting covenant never to be broken".¹ In later years, he wrote of it: "I was led along into initial experience of God, socially and by force of the blind religious instinct in my nature".² The event was prophetic of his more mature years.

He was, however, to go through the experience of doubt - doubting even the reality of his former experience - before he was to have such an experience again. As already noted, after entering Yale College, he lost his early religious faith although his grip on the moral side of life remained firm. The period of doubt did not last long; relief came in a religious revival which, in the winter of 1831, swept the college

1. Life and Letters - pp.20-1

2. Ibid. - p.445.

although he remained aloof for a considerable time. In a sermon preached many years later, in Yale College Chapel, he said: "There is a story lodged in the little bedroom of one of these dormitories, which, I pray God, His recording angel may note, allowing it never to be lost".¹ The conversion seems to have come by way of faith in the principle of right and was an advance into "the clear moral light of Christ",² but it was a real step forward and it banished his doubts.

Seventeen years later, the greatest and most mystical experience came. He had been prepared for it by sorrow and by reading. His wife described the event thus:

"On an early morning of February, his wife awoke, to hear that the light they had waited for, more than they that watch for the morning, had risen indeed. She asked, 'What have you seen?' He replied, 'The Gospel'. It had come to him at last, after all his thought and study, not as something reasoned out, but as an inspiration - a revelation from the mind of God Himself."³

That he considered this experience the turning point in his life is evident from his frequent references to it. Five years before his death, he said of it:

"I seemed to pass a boundary. I had never been very legal in my Christian

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1. Sermons on Living Subjects - p.178.
 2. Life and Letters - p.445.
 3. Ibid. - p.192.

life, but now I passed from those partial seeings, glimpses and doubts, into a clearer knowledge of God and into His inspirations, which I have never wholly lost. The change was into faith - a sense of the freeness of God and the ease of approach to Him".¹

Again, in a letter, he said: "I was set on by the personal discovery of Christ, and of God as represented in Him".² His own words tell the story so well that no comment is needed.

The fourth experience came in 1861 while he was studying the subject of the work of Christ in the preparation of his book, 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'.

In a letter to his wife, he said:

"I have had some very fresh and delightful musings of the morning on this last. Following out the theme yesterday morning for two hours before rising, I seemed to be set on by another great stage in my heart's life. I never saw so distinctly as now what it is to be a disciple, or what the keynote is of all most Christly experience. I think, too, that I have made my last discovery in this mine. First, now, fourth, I lay hold of and appropriate the general culminating fact of God's vicarious character in goodness, and of mine to be accomplished in Christ as a follower. My next stage of discovery will be when I drop the body and go home, to be with Christ in the conscious, openly revealed friendship of a soul whose affinities are with Him."³

His experiences of discovery, however, were not to be ended so soon. Indeed, they seemed to come

1. Life and Letters - p.192.

2. Ibid. - p. 193

3. Ibid. - pp.445-6.

easier in later years, although perhaps not in such a soul-stirring way. In 1862, he wrote:

"If there be anything now that makes my life worth living, it is the consciousness that Christ is being opened more and more fully to me. I am astonished sometimes at the wondrous depth and fertility of the revelation. It used, many years ago, to cost me much digging to get hold of anything fresh in the theme, and I wondered why so much should be said of the riches of it. Now it opens itself, without digging, farther and faster than I can sketch it." ¹

There was at least one more spiritual experience of this kind before his death for in 1870, he wrote:

"I have had some delightful times and passages since I came here such as I never had before. I never so saw God, never had Him come so broadly, clearly out. He has not spoken to me, but He has done what is more. There has been nothing debatable to speak for, but an infinite easiness and universal presentation to thought, as it were by revelation." ²

The 'new light' received at this time was embodied in the book 'Forgiveness and Law'.

In all these experiences, and especially in the later ones, there is something of that strange feeling of the prophets of old, who were able to say: "Thus saith the Lord". As in the case of Augustine, Luther, and Wesley, the light of these visions of truth lingered permanently on his soul with the result

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1. Life and Letters - p.478.
 2. Ibid. - p.516.

that his thoughts on the particular subjects of theology concerned were not mere opinions but rather firm convictions. It is not surprising that he defined Christian doctrine as "formulated Christian experience".

(c) Influence of other writers

Horace Bushnell was, perhaps, less indebted to other writers for the inspiration of his thoughts than any other writer. The explanation of this may be found in his profound and original mind. His daughter said of him: "Few men ever enjoyed the art of original creation more". According to his own definition of genius, he was one par excellence for he had the faculty of mental application whereby his mind came "to an astonishing maturity without much assistance from books".¹

This had its disadvantages as well as its advantages. It meant that he was not a wide reader in theology. He disliked large libraries and even suggested that the world would be better if a considerable part of them were burned. That he did read fairly widely on general subjects is not to be denied - his own writings contain many illustrations of this fact - but he did not devote himself to a thorough study of -----
1. Life and Letters - p.61.

the great works of theology and philosophy,¹ and this proved to be one of his most serious faults. He did not even have an intimate acquaintance with the New England theology. A friend, who knew him in his college days, wrote: "With one or two exceptions he little cared, or felt the need to learn, the judgments of the great masters of human thought, or of the theology of the Church itself, as embodied in its treatises and creeds." ²

Bushnell was aware of his weakness in this respect. His admission, after he had prepared the material of his book 'Christ in Theology', is significant: "This volume has cost me five times the labour which the other cost, because it has put me to the investigations of others, which, to me, is the hardest and most difficult of all sorts of work."³

At another time, he justified it as follows:

"It is very hard for me to read a book through. If it is stupid and good-for-nothing, of course I have to give it up; and if it is really worth reading, it starts my mind off on some track of its own that I am more inclined to follow than I am to find out what the author has to say."⁴

There is, however, one notable and very important exception to his lack of indebtedness to

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1. See Editor's Preface to 'Building Eras' - p.3.
 2. Atwater - Presbyterian Review, Vol.2, p.116.
 3. Life and Letters - p.247.
 4. Ibid. p.295.

other authors - Samuel Taylor Coleridge. After a first attempt, in which "the author seemed foggy and unintelligible", to quote his own words,

"it fell to me to begin the reading of Coleridge. For a whole half-year I was buried under his 'Aids to Reflection' and trying vainly to look up through. I was quite sure that I saw a star glimmer but I could not quite see the stars. My habit was only landscape before; but now I saw enough to convince me of a whole other world somewhere overhead, a range of realities in higher tier, that I must climb after, and, if possible, apprehend."¹

Again, a friend of his reports a conversation in which he was asked what authors he did like: "He mentioned two or three, but finally demolished them all, save Coleridge. I have often heard him say that he was more indebted to Coleridge than to any extra-Scriptural author".² Such a statement seems at first an exaggeration but there can be no doubt of its truth. Even without his own admission, it would not be difficult to show his debt to Coleridge, for the influence is apparent in all his early books. It is not too much to say that without Coleridge, Bushnell would have been a far different theologian and perhaps not even an outstanding one.

It seems that the only other British writer, contemporary with Bushnell, who has influenced the

1. Ibid. - pp.208-9. Note: The 'Aids to Reflection' was published by Prof. Marsh of Vermont in 1829, second edition in 1840.

2. Life and Letters - p.499.

development of theology, and with whose writings Bushnell was acquainted, was McLeod Campbell. Unfortunately, however, the Scottish theologian's masterpiece, 'The Nature of the Atonement', although published in 1856, was not read by Bushnell till 1874, after he had already prepared the material of his last book on the atonement. The discovery came too late to have any influence on his theory.¹

The similarity of Bushnell's teaching on many subjects to that of Schleiermacher has led many to suppose that he must have been greatly influenced in a direct way by the German theologian. Even Munger goes so far as to say that Coleridge and Schleiermacher were the only writers who greatly influenced Bushnell.² But what proof is there for this, as far as Schleiermacher is concerned? Bushnell read no German. He did, it is true, read Prof. Stuart's translation of Schleiermacher's 'Critique on Sabellius', published in the 'Biblical Repository' about 1834. No doubt, it was this fact which led Fisher to say that the essay was at the basis of Bushnell's discussion on the Trinity.³ But what did Bushnell, himself, say on this matter? In the introductory part of his book, 'God in Christ',

1. See his praise of the book in his preface to 'Forgiveness and Law' - pp.28-32.

2. See his 'Horace Bushnell' - pp. 209-10.

3. History of Christian Doctrine p.439.

he said of the above mentioned article: "I was greatly obliged to Professor S. for giving it to the public, and not the less because it confirmed me in results to which I had come by my own private struggles".¹ This quotation is surely evidence that, although the influence was a real one, and perhaps a greater one than Bushnell realized, it was not one to be classed with that of Coleridge.

How, then, is the similarity to be explained? By reading Coleridge, Bushnell tapped the springs of romanticism - springs akin to those which fed Schleiermacher. Influenced, then, by the same source, and laying a like emphasis on religious experience, it was only natural that he should come to conclusions somewhat similar to those of the German theologian.

Many writers have noted the resemblance between Bushnell's teaching on the atonement and that of Peter Abelard.² This raises the question of his indebtedness to the medieval theologian. A close review of Bushnell's works reveals that there is no definite acknowledgment of such an influence. On one occasion, it is true, Bushnell does list Abelard as among those who have endeavoured "to unfold some

1. God in Christ - p.112.

2. e.g. David Smith - The Atonement in the Light of History and the Modern Spirit - p.93.

conception of the Cross, that will make it a salvation by its power on life and character".¹ But there is no word of praise for Abelard's theory such as there is for Anselm's and it is probable that Bushnell, himself, would have considered his theory to be a good deal further from Abelard's than many writers have placed it.

In the conversation quoted above, Bushnell spoke, at first, of writers other than Coleridge whom he admired. It is interesting to conjecture who these were. Bunyan may have been one for Bushnell had great respect for his style of thought. And, if he was thinking of those writings which influenced him to any considerable extent at a particular period, he may have mentioned Upham's 'Life of Madame Guyon' and his 'Interior Life', and also Fénelon's writings, for he had been reading these prior to 1848. That he always liked this type of reading is evident from the remark of his friend, Dr. Bartol, that, when Bushnell was his guest, "it was some book of mystic devotion he chose, for recreation, to take up".² It is also well to remember that he was acquainted with "the literature of humanity" from Plato and Shakespeare down, and was

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.xxxi.

2. Life and Letters - p.186.

in a sense the first of the modern school which draws its inspiration from all fields of study and thought.

(d) Theory of language

Still another formative influence on Bushnell's theology was his theory of language for his theory of knowledge was linked up with it. He seems to have come to his main conclusions on this subject while still in college, and it was the application of these conclusions, in later years, to the subjects of theology that led him to his most important discoveries. In one sense, it is rather pathetic that Bushnell was so little interested in modern philosophy that he remained ignorant of the Kantian philosophy for, as Gordon has pointed out, it is Kant's problem of knowledge with which Bushnell is dealing in his theory of language.¹ He did not grasp the full significance of the problem for his theory is a theory of the expressible rather than a theory of the knowable. Still, it may have been for the best that he had to work out his own theory. Munger has said that it "did for him what evolution does for the theologian of to-day."² That was a big advantage to a man in Bushnell's day.

That Bushnell regarded an understanding of his theory as essential to an understanding of his

1. The Christ of To-day - p.287.

2. Horace Bushnell - p.260.

theology is evident from the fact that he published his first book on theology with a long introduction on the subject of language and appealed to his readers not to pass over this part.¹ His daughter, too, in writing his 'Life and Letters' took great pains to stress its importance. "Here", she says, "we repeat with emphasis, is the key to Horace Bushnell".² No doubt, this warning was needed in his time if he was not to be misunderstood. But, as Munger has pointed out, it is not so necessary now: "Had he lived a half century later, he would have had comparatively little need to explain himself".³ Biblical criticism and less rigid views of inspiration have helped to free theology from most of the features to which Bushnell objected. Still, it is well to know something about his theory of language before attempting to understand his theology. Not only will it lead to a better grasp of his real meaning but it will help to relate him to other theologians. It is worth noting, as Stevens has observed,⁴ that his theory of language is very closely related to the position of the French so-called Fideistic School - Bouvier of Geneva, and Sabatier and Ménégoz of Paris - a school that is in turn related to the Ritschlian movement.

1. See 'God in Christ' - p.102.

2. Life and Letters - p. 203.

3. Horace Bushnell - p. 102.

4. See The American Journal of Theology, Vol.6, 1902, p.41.

At the outset, Bushnell recognizes that the possibility of our attaining to truth in religion is bound up with the question of language. Language is inexact by its very nature and even at its best can only be pictorial and suggestive: "The whole web of speech is curiously woven metaphor, and we are able to talk out thoughts in it - never one of them visible - by throwing out metaphoric images in metaphoric grammar, so as to give them expression".¹ For him, theological definitions become metaphors and creeds become poems; true thinking is original thinking and the best method of teaching is by suggestion that awakes thought.

Since words naturally fail to express fully the thought they are meant to express, it follows that the attempt is continually being made to give expression to truth from another side:

"As form battles form, and one form neutralizes another, all the insufficiencies of words are filled out, the contrarieties liquidated, and the mind settles into a full and just apprehension of the pure spiritual truth. Accordingly we never come so near to a truly well rounded view of any truth, as when it is offered paradoxically; that is, under contradictions; that is under two or more dictions, which, taken as dictions, are contrary one to the other."²

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1. Pulpit Talent - p.174. The article from which this quotation is made - 'The Gospel a Gift to the Imagination' - was published in 1860 and is generally acknowledged to be his clearest exposition on this subject.
 2. God in Christ - p.55. The idea expressed in the above quotation is an old one and goes back beyond Paul and Jesus. It is curious that it has been found necessary to reassert it every few generations - Bushnell and F. W. Robertson being its English exponents in the nineteenth century. The classical exposition of this idea in philosophy is the Hegelian dialectic.

Bushnell objected vehemently to religious subjects being treated in a mechanical way. If he had lived in this century, he would have made some scathing remarks on the use of the term "automatic" in theological writings. All through his life, he sought to show that spiritual truth, which by its very nature is hampered by its expression in finite forms, can only become full and free to persons who have something of the infinite in them. His own failure to appreciate Coleridge's 'Aids to Reflection', the first time he read it, had taught him that "an experience is needed to interpret words".¹

He even considered it an advantage that spiritual truth could not be fully expressed in this life. In a letter, written from Geneva, he put it thus: "I have observed a hundred times that the sublime requires the unknown as an element. A cathedral should never be finished. A mountain should be partially hidden by others, or enveloped in clouds."² Again, he said of Christ's revelation: "It is a revealing process, but yet enveloped in mystery - revealing even the more, by means of the mystery."³ It is interesting to note the similarity to Barth in this idea of concealment being necessary to revelation.

The question has often been asked, 'Does Bushnell's theory of language deny the possibility of man attaining to truth in religion?' If it is theology as an exact science that is meant, the answer must be 'yes'. But if it is the

1. Life and Letters - p.208.

2. Ibid. - p.136

3. God in Christ - p.170

truth that makes one free, then, the answer is 'no'. The story of Bushnell's own solitary life, in which for many years he struggled against great odds in order to get as full as possible a vision of truth, and to express it clearly in writing so that others might profit by his labours, is ample proof of his own confidence in the ability of language to convey spiritual truth.

At the same time, it must be admitted that he allowed his ideas on language to carry him to exaggerated and often misleading statements, as when he said that he was ready to accept as many creeds as fell in his way. He forgot that the great creeds of the church owed their origin to the fact that they were needed to displace statements of the faith that were regarded as false, and that, during the centuries since their formation, they have succeeded in conveying their meaning in much the same form to countless souls. As Foster has said, "It is not true that there are no such things as best forms of stating truths and best methods of their presentation and defense".¹ Bushnell's own struggle to give expression to the truth he had reached should have taught him this.

His theory of language is responsible for some of the most characteristic weaknesses of his theology. It explains his kinship with the Eastern type of theological mind for it meant that he followed the Greek use of the Logos. It also explains his Sabellian tendencies, his

1. A History of the New England Theology - p.407

preference for certain features of the Grotian theory of the atonement, and his choice of the subjective-objective theory, for all these are based on his idea of "expression".

Again, Bushnell unconsciously seems to have applied the principles derived from his theory of language more to himself than to those with whom he disagreed. There is likely more than a grain of truth in the criticism made by his contemporary, Charles Hodge: "If rationalism is Dr. Bushnell's sword, mysticism is his shield, So long as he is attacking, no man makes more of the 'constructive logic'; but as soon as the logic is brought to bear against himself, he turns saint, and is wrapt in contemplation".¹ Bushnell was too much a man of his own century to be free from this weakness.

(e) His vocation as a preacher

The title of Munger's book is 'Horace Bushnell Preacher and Theologian' and it is not a mere chance that the words are arranged in that order. "In Bushnell", he says, "the preacher absorbed the theologian and supplanted his methods".² Another writer has said: "The designation of theologian cannot, in any technical sense at all events, be applied to him".³ Although this is hyperbolic language,

1. Princeton Review - Vol. 21, p.273.

2. Horace Bushnell - p.275.

3. S. S. Drew - Contemporary Review, August 1879, p.823. Compare Hodge's remark intended as a criticism: "He is a poet and neither a philosopher nor theologian". (Princeton Review - Vol. 21, p.298.)

there is sufficient truth in it to make us realize that we cannot understand his theology without taking into consideration his vocation as a preacher. Few great theologians have found their life work in preaching and ministering to the pastoral needs of a congregation. Horace Bushnell did; and, as a natural result, his theology was profoundly influenced by his work. His vocation may be said to account for some of the most distinctive features of his theology, for, as Franks has pointed out, one of the main differences between the theology of Bushnell and that of Schleiermacher and Ritschl is that the American's was the work of a preacher.¹

There were advantages and disadvantages in Bushnell's position. The latter will be considered first. An obvious remark is that his life as a preacher led indirectly to a lack of that intimate acquaintance with the real teaching of the Scriptures to which he would have been forced, had he occupied a chair in theology. To quote Foster's criticism: "He never gives evidence of careful exegetical study of the Bible - had, in fact, never had any competent training in its methods. He saw; but his vision was not always produced by the light that streams from the pages of the Bible".²

His life work also led to a lack of historical

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1. History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ, Vol.2, p.413.
 2. A History of the New England Theology - p.411.

knowledge. If he had been compelled in his work to teach the history of Christian doctrine, he would not have had to make such an admission as he did, when he said of the Nicene Creed: "On a careful study of the creed I feel obliged to confess that I had not sufficiently conceived its import, or the title it has to respect as a Christian document".¹

He tended to lay too much stress on the practical side of theology. Not only did he expect truth to have a definite contribution to make to life, but, at times, he was inclined to hold that nothing is true that does not have this function. One critic has suggested that for Bushnell the question, 'What is true?', was far outweighed by the question, 'How shall we bring these things about?'² His lack of historical knowledge and his ability to make "discoveries" made it imperative that he should verify his conclusions. But failing to regard them as unproved hypotheses - the product of unfinished thought - he often published first and then read more widely with the result that he sometimes changed his mind. In this may be seen the tendency of the preacher to give to his congregation his freshly thought out material. There is also in most of his books a certain diffuseness and propensity to repetition that may be traced to the same source.³

1. Christ in Theology - p.177.

2. C. F. Dole - New World, Vol. 8, p.702.

3. e.g. cf. pp.8-11 with pp.100-1 in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice.'

On the whole, however, these defects are more than balanced by the advantages of his position. The warmth, earnestness, force, and vigour, natural to the preacher more than counteract the want of precision. Bushnell did not hesitate to call in "the angels of imagery" to help him express the deepest truths of theology.¹ 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is so concrete in its references and is so well filled with epigrams and illustrations that it does not read like the usual work of theology. It is a good example of Foster's saying: "If the preacher becomes a theologian, the theology is likely to become one of life and power".² It is living thought rather than laboured logic. Bushnell's 'vital atmosphere was that of a poet' and it led naturally to a poetic expression of his theology.

His life work gave him the leisure and the opportunity to study one problem in theology at a time. The academic teacher must pay attention to every department of his subject. But Bushnell, as a preacher, was free to devote himself to the subjects that appealed to him, and to think them through to his own satisfaction. It is significant that the theological subjects, which claimed his attention, were comparatively few, and that they were ones which arose naturally from his work as a preacher. For

1. See 'Pulpit Talent' - p.9.

2. A History of the New England Theology - p.402.

his preaching centred around one theme. In speaking of two complaints made against his preaching, he refers to one, as being "that I preach Christ too much, which I cannot think is a fault to be repented of; for Christ is all, and beside Him there is no gospel to be preached or received."¹ He said in a sermon that "one of the greatest talents in religious discovery, is the finding how to hang up questions, and let them hang without being at all anxious about them".² It was a talent that was much easier to him because of his calling.

His work as pastor and preacher was largely responsible for his approaching theology from the experimental side. He naturally looked for the forms by which spiritual truth might be expressed best in order to promote the religious life of his people. In relation to the same context, may be noted his fondness for the intuitive method. His task was not to teach the people to reason about religion, but rather to bring them to see its truths in the light of faith. This must have quickened his own ability to see the religious truths hidden from the many.

Bushnell's theory of the atonement owed something to his vocation and its environment. It has often been noted that each successive period of history has produced

1. Life and Letters - p.286.

2. Sermons on Living Subjects - p.182.

its own type of soteriological doctrine, cast in the mould of its dominant conception. The brigandage and warfare of the Patristic age, the chivalry of the medieval period, and the Absolute Monarchy and Jurisprudence of the post-reformation era, all gave a definite colour to the theories of the person and work of Christ taught in their time. In the light of this, it may be said that the work of preaching, which brought Bushnell into close touch with the personality of man in the environment of a new nation inspired by high ethical ideals, had more than a little influence on his "moral" theory.

His vocation had a tendency to make him more orthodox. If he had been a professor of Divinity from the time of his graduation, it is probable that his fellow ministers, who attempted to try him for heresy, would have had far more serious errors to consider. Time after time, it was the test of preaching applied to doctrine that made him change his opinion. In his book, 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', it is the last chapter, entitled 'Practical Uses and Ways of Preaching', that reveals his dissatisfaction with the theory. And he, himself, acknowledges that it was in the writing of two practical discourses that "fresh light" found him and caused him to write another book to replace the latter half of it.¹ It is significant that from the first no complaint was heard regarding the

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.10

theology of his published sermons.

His vocation as a preacher also meant that he left behind him an extra source of material for students of his theology. As Salmond has said, "His theology was in most things that he wrote, and nowhere more distinctly or characteristically than in his pulpit discourses".¹ They are none the less valuable in that they sometimes treat the doctrinal subjects from a slightly different point of view. They give his main contentions in the language of every day life. Indeed, it may be claimed that his true thought is in them, rather than in passages of his theological works, where he sought to demolish opposing theories or to conciliate his orthodox friends. Munger has said of his sermons: "They are a court of appeal when the treatise falters or goes amiss in its unnecessary logic; the heart of the matter is to be found in those utterances which came from him as he looked straight into the lives of the people and preached the gospel to them 'first hand'".² His sermons are also the key to the development of his theological thought. The root ideas of some of the most characteristic statements of his theological books can be traced to sermons preached at an earlier date. The value of his sermons as theology has not been fully recognized by students of Bushnell.

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1. London Quarterly Review, Vol. 5, (New Series) pp.137-8.
 2. Horace Bushnell - p.275.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION TO BUSHNELL'S DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

(a) Introductory

With the exception of the fourth century, the nineteenth century has contributed more than any other to the discussion of the problems of Christology and of the Trinity. It is not surprising, then, that Horace Bushnell, a typical man of his age, should have been much occupied with these great themes.

In some respects, it does not seem appropriate to use the term "doctrine" in speaking of Bushnell's Christology. He did not minimize the importance of Christ, for he could say: "After all, there is not very much in the Bible, or anywhere else, besides Jesus Christ";¹ but he disliked dogma so much that he was almost afraid to formulate his thought into doctrine. He felt, too, that it is impossible to do justice to Christ's person by any mere statement of words. In a sermon, which bears the suggestive title, 'The Gospel of the Face', he expresses his opinion thus: "What is Christ in his person, but God's own formulation of himself, (i.e.) not the statement, but the image of himself. What less than a very bold irreverence then can it be to substitute the revelation-form or face of God, by any so prosy thing as a formula in words".² Again, in 'Christian Nurture', in claiming that Christ is the truth,

1. Life and Letters - p.478.

2. Sermons on Living Subjects - p.75.

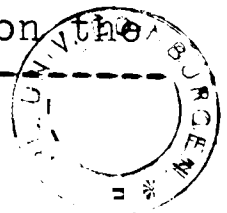
he says: "He is so, not merely in the sense that he parabolizes the truth, and gets it thus into human conditions or analogies, but that his own person also and life are the eternal form of truth".¹.

Yet all this did not prevent his giving in his writings - and especially in his earlier works - an account of his beliefs regarding Christ's person. He did not intend his exposition to be 'doctrine' in the older sense of the word, but he did have enough faith in language to attempt to express the truth as he saw it, hoping that his words would be suggestive enough to lead others at least to see the problems involved, if not to bring them to the conclusions he had reached.

Although Bushnell was seriously interested in the problems connected with our Lord's person, his material on this subject is not voluminous. It is not to be compared with that on the work of Christ, although some of the latter is useful in illustrating his Christological thought. The explanation of this comparative paucity of material may be found in the fact that his interest in Christological questions was more ethical than speculative, with the result that he deprecated unprofitable curiosity into what he considered to be unpractical questions. Many problems either have been treated very briefly or omitted altogether.

Like that of most theologians, Bushnell's thinking on the person of Christ was influenced by his thought on the

1. Christian Nurture - p.359.



work of Christ and vice-versa. It is easy to see the truth of this in his early teaching on these themes. In view of the fact that his views on the Work of Christ changed considerably as he grew older, it is possible that in his more advanced years he would have formulated his Christology differently. The only clue to his Christological thought in his later years is in his writings on the atonement and in his sermons. A few illustrations from these sources will be referred to in the following chapters.

It seems strange that a theologian who emphasized the experimental basis of theology should have written first on Christology and then have become absorbed almost entirely in the subject of the work of Christ. We might have expected that the latter subject would have led him to consider the greatness of Christ's person. Whatever be the explanation of his early approach to the subject, the explanation of his later neglect of it is more evident. In some respects, Bushnell was a 'one-subject' man and when he found a subject big enough to hold his interest for years - as the subject of the atonement held him - he did not allow himself to become absorbed in other subjects. It is also probable that he became more and more convinced that Christ's person can be interpreted best through the medium of his redeeming work.

(b) Influences on his Christology

Three things had a great deal of influence on Bushnell's method of treating the problem of the person of Christ. One was his own personal experiences which had resulted in an overwhelming sense of God. Another was his dislike of the current "two nature" doctrine of Christ's person. Another was the Unitarian controversy which was still raging in New England and which, by way of reaction, had given a peculiar emphasis to certain points in the current "orthodox" teaching on the subject. Bushnell's problem was to steer a way between the Charybdis of Unitarianism and the Scylla of the distorted orthodox position. It is well to know something about each of these influences before considering our subject proper.

Munger has said that although Bushnell was not a pantheist he was pantheistic and that Novalis' phrase "God-intoxicated" can be applied equally as well to him as to Spinoza.¹ As Munger also points out, the best proof of this is a letter written to his wife in 1852 after a visit to Niagara Falls, where his soul revelled "in the contemplation of this tremendous type of God's eternity and majesty."

The following quotation is a long one but it is important to have it before us in our study of his Christology. It is the key to many of his best and most characteristic statements as well as to many of his weaknesses:

1. Horace Bushnell - p.177.

"How little do we know as yet, my dearest earthly friend, of what is contained in the word God! We put on great magnifiers in the form of adjectives, and they are true; but the measures they ascribe, certified by the judgment, are not realized, or only dimly realized in our experience. I see this proved to me now and then, by the capacity I have to think and feel greater things concerning God. It is as if my soul were shut in within a vast orb made up of concentric shells of brass or iron. I could hear, even when I was a child, the faint ring of a stroke on the one that is outmost and largest of them all; but I began to break through one shell after another, bursting every time into a kind of new, and wondrous, and vastly enlarged heaven, hearing no more the dull, close ring of the nearest casement, but the ring, as it were, of concave firmaments and third heavens set with stars; till now, so gloriously has my experience of God opened His greatness to me, I seem to have gotten quite beyond all physical images and measures, even those of astronomy, and simply to think God is to find and bring into my feeling more than even the imagination can reach".¹

In criticizing the view of the two nature theory held in his own day, Bushnell was striking at one of the chief defects in traditional Christology. His own greatest perplexity on the subject had arisen at this point because of that teaching. He believed that many of the New England theologians, whether they realized it or not, held a "bi-personal" Saviour. He regarded their account as unscriptural and useless, or rather worse than useless for it created untold difficulties. It denied the most significant part of the incarnation - the real unity between the human and the divine. Instead of this, a partnership is substituted that really means nothing. "If the divine part were residing in Saturn, he would be as truly united with the human race as now".² Such a theory brought to

1. Life and Letters - p.277

2. God in Christ - p.154.

its logical conclusion is shocking to man's rational and moral senses.¹ The influence upon Bushnell of close contact with this two-nature theory came by way of reaction. The swing of the pendulum carried him to the other extreme. In his violent dislike of it, he tended to do away with the distinction altogether.

His distrust of the Unitarian position helped to make this bias even more pronounced in that it led him to think of Christ's nature as essentially divine. He considered the Unitarian theory too awkward and too impossible for belief, and too meagre to satisfy man's need. A letter to his Unitarian friend, Dr. Bartol, concerning an article by the latter, is enlightening on this subject:

"Nay, your human or creature Saviour is, in one view, an offence to us, because it justifies that frigid dictum of the logical judgment which asserts that God is too far off, too essentially incommunicable, to suffer a real union with humanity...this

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1. The following quotation is an interesting example of what Bushnell had in mind when he condemned the current Christology. It illustrates the crude position that could result when the two nature theory was taken too literally. It is from Symington's work on the Atonement (p.164):

"Although the human nature was alone capable of suffering, it was nevertheless the person, to whom this nature belonged, who suffered. It may be thought that, at this rate, as the person was divine, such an assertion involves the blasphemy that Deity suffered. By no means. When a person suffers, it does not follow that he suffers in all that pertains to him. He may suffer in his property, and not suffer in his honor; he may suffer in his happiness, and not in his character; he may suffer in his body, and not in his soul; still it is the person who suffers. So in the case before us, while the Son of God suffers in his human nature, it is still the person that suffers".
(As quoted by Bushnell, 'Christ in Theology' - pp.101-2).

is not enough; it does not fill me; my Saviour is more, closer, vaster - God Himself enshrined in this world-history with me to sanctify both it and me, and be in it and me, the fulness of Him that filleth all".¹

Bushnell believed that the Unitarians viewed Jesus "as the human, still out of humanity and above it".² It is rather significant that in his own theory he aimed at the very opposite of this.

(c) Guiding principles in his Christology

Bushnell approached the problem of the person of Christ with certain guiding principles in mind. These will be referred to incidentally in the chapters in which his thought is expounded, but it is also well for the sake of clearness to outline them at this stage.

The first one that may be noted is one that is in keeping with his overwhelming sense of God, (viz.) that the purpose of Christ is to reveal God. Christ and the Trinity are "relatives to conduct us up to the absolute".³ Or, as he expresses it elsewhere, the person of Jesus "is given us only to communicate God and His love".⁴

A second principle that is at the heart of his Christology is that the truth about Christ is in what He expresses. "The reality of Christ is in what he expresses of God, not what he is in his physical conditions or under

1. Life and Letters - p.220.

2. God in Christ - p.127.

3. Ibid - p.144.

4. Ibid - p.157.

his human limitations".¹ This principle, which is derived from his theory of language, is apparent not only in his Christology but also in his writings on the atonement - especially in his early ones.

A third principle follows from the above two - it is not for us to peer into the inner nature of Christ's person. Jealous of the warmth of true spiritual religion, he was afraid of the use of the speculative reason in our understanding of God - he once said that "the boasted clearness of a God made level to reason is the clearness of a wintry day".² Applying this to Christ, he concludes: "All such efforts, therefore, at the interior conception or analysis of Christ are to be discarded".³ Or as he puts it in 'Christ in Theology' in words which sum up the three principles, "Christ is here to express God, not to puzzle us in questions about the internal composition of his person".⁴ George B. Stevens regarded this last statement as an excellent summation of the Ritschlian Christology.⁵

A fourth principle that Bushnell insisted on is that all doctrine must be based on experience. Like Schleiermacher, he started from a present experience of

1. God in Christ - p.156.

Note: it is rather curious that Bushnell admits that this does not hold in man - "man obeys for what obedience is, but the subject obedient state of Christ is accepted for what it conveys or expresses". (God in Christ, p.161). Does this give his case away? It certainly weakens his argument.

2. God in Christ - p.178.

3. Ibid - p.243.

4. Christ in Theology - p.94.

5. See the American Journal of Theology, Vol.6, p.50.

the new life as immediately dependent on Jesus. At the same time, he kept in touch with solid ground, for he always showed the living Christ through the New Testament picture of his earthly life. Especially is this true of his books on the atonement and his sermons which are filled with a wonderful wealth of Scriptural illustrations.

Although it is true that Bushnell's Christology tended to take Christ from above and to place him down in humanity, yet as far as his presentation of the historic Christ is concerned, it may be said that he begins from below and works upward. In this he is like Luther, as may be seen from a comparison of the following quotations. "The Scriptures", says Luther, "begin very gently, and lead us on to Christ as to a man, and then on to one who is Lord over all creatures, and after that to one who is God."¹ The quotation from Bushnell is a good example of his extraordinary aptitude in finding beautiful and striking illustrations. In 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' after describing the incidents of Christ's earthly life, he says: "And so the merely human beginning grows into what is more and more visibly superhuman, dying into boundlessness and glory, as the sun when it sets in the sea".²

1. As quoted by H. R. Mackintosh - The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ - p.232.

2. p.160.

(d) Minor problems

As has already been indicated, the number of subjects considered by Bushnell in his discussion of Christology was not very large. He reserved the central place for a few main themes; the others he treated but briefly. It will simplify later chapters if his treatment of these minor problems be considered here.

He accepted the virgin birth of Christ although he did not consider belief in it essential to faith.¹ He did not at first seriously face the problem of the resurrection although he did throw the weight of his opinion in favour of the position that Christ's resurrection was according to law. The whole question assumes its true place in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' where he relies on it to give the key to Christ's life and death. The question of the second coming of Christ did not interest him in its old form but he did believe that "the world is to be generally subdued to Christ".² He has little³ to say on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper although he dispensed it regularly. The question of the relation of the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith was not the problem in his day that it was for later theologians. He did, however, indicate a position which they considered to be essential

1. God in Christ - pp.123-4.

2. Life and Letters - pp.99-102.

3. A few of the selections from sermons in 'The Spirit in Man' are on this subject.

in the treatment of the problem, viz., that Jesus Christ is "the central figure and power and with Him the entire fabric either stands or falls".¹

This is also the place to give some consideration to Bushnell's mystical conception of Christ. According to his own definition, anyone holding his theory of language would be a mystic. "A mystic", he says, "is one who finds a secret meaning, both in words and in things, back of their common or accepted meaning - some agency of Life or Living Thought, hid under the forms of words and institutions, and historical events".² But Bushnell tended to be a mystic in the more common use of the term - at least in the sense in which it is applied to the Apostle Paul. (Bushnell would likely have agreed with Ritschl's denunciation of pantheistic mysticism). Fisher claimed that "much that was involved in the old idea of the 'unio mystica' Bushnell interwove in his conception".³

There is no doubt that this mystical tendency was derived from mystics like Fénelon and Madam Guyon. It is in his writings soon after his religious experience of 1848 that this is most apparent. In the sermon, 'Christ the Form of the Soul', he pictures Christ as the "indwelling, formative life of the soul - the new creating power of righteousness for humanity".⁴ This sermon is the best

1. Nature and the Supernatural - p.191.

2. God in Christ - p.94.

3. History of Christian Doctrine - p.442.

4. This quotation is from his wife's account of the sermon. See 'Life and Letters' - p.192.

example of his mystical conception of Christ. As it was only published in 1903, and is not well known, the following quotations from it are given:

"What form is to body, character is to spirit. For as all material bodies are shaped by the outline or boundary which contains them, so the soul has its working and life contained within the limits or laws of the character. Indeed we can give no better definition of character than to say that it is the form of the soul, that habit or mould into which the feelings, principles, aims, thoughts, and choices have settled".

"He (Paul) imagines Christ dwelling in their soul and giving it a form out of his own. This we may say is the grand object of the gospel plan."

"It is nothing then but to have Christ formed in you, and that is a work to be done not as much by you as by him."

"You are called meantime to make your life an imitation of Christ; for though you are to be changed only by his power dwelling in you, still you will never offer yourself so completely to his power as¹ when you are actively concerned to be like him."

Although this conception of Christ comes out strongest in this sermon, it makes itself felt in all his writings. He often speaks of man's need of being "Christed" and of being perpetually in Christ. It may be noted that Bushnell always interpreted the mystical union in terms of personality. Here, as elsewhere, he showed his preference for the ethical and spiritual categories.

1. See 'The Spirit in Man' - pp.39, 40, 45, 47.

CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

(a) God in Christ - 1849.

The divinity of Christ - the most disputed problem of his day - was naturally for Bushnell the chief problem of Christology. It was the subject given to him by the authorities for his address at the Annual Commencement of Yale College in 1848 and he accepted it with the greatest pleasure. Not that he regarded it as an easy task but he thought that the time had come for the re-opening of a problem which had caused lengthy discussions and many divisions among New England theologians. He believed that a re-investigation of it would come nearer to a practical settlement than at any former period. That Bushnell's interest in the subject was not merely a passing one aroused by the events of the day, is evident from the fact that one of the most important chapters in 'Nature and the Supernatural', 1858, - a book that had no polemical interest so far as the dispute between the Unitarians and the orthodox theologians is concerned - is on the theme of Christ's divinity.

The Yale address - afterwards incorporated into the book 'God in Christ' - is really an address on three closely connected subjects - 'the divinity of Christ', 'the humanity of Christ', and 'the Christian Trinity'. In some

respects, the first mentioned receives the least attention although it supplies the subject of the discourse. The title, however, is a suitable one inasmuch as Bushnell considers that the difficulties raised by the relations of the divinity and the humanity in the person of Christ, and by the person of Christ in the Trinity, constitute the real objections to belief in the divinity of Christ. In this chapter, the material in this discourse of Bushnell's, bearing directly on the subject of the divinity of Christ - together with appropriate material in his other works¹ - will be given due consideration. The remainder of the material in the address will be reserved for the next two chapters.

Bushnell chose a text for his theme - 1 John 1:2: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us". He regards this verse as the "most beautiful answer that can be given in words" to the question whether Christ is divine. Not only does it teach that the reality of Christ is God but there is "an indication in the term was manifested of that which is the real end of his mission, and the proper solvent of whatever inquiries may be started by his person as appearing

1. 'Christ in Theology' does not touch directly on the divinity of Christ although it re-states other subjects of 'God in Christ', (e.g.) the humanity of Christ, the Trinity, and the work of Christ. The explanation of this lies in the fact that it was Bushnell's views on these last subjects that were most severely treated by the critics of 'God in Christ'.

in the flesh, or under the historic conditions of humanity".¹

He then proceeds to a definition of the divinity of Christ. This definition may be regarded as the key note of his theory. It has brought forth more criticism, perhaps, than any other statement of Bushnell's. Its importance cannot be overestimated, for it throws light both on the sources of his perplexities and the difficulties he was trying to avoid. It reveals the strength as well as the weakness of his particular theory. Therefore, the quotation is given in full:

"By the divinity of Christ, I do not understand simply that Christ differs from other men, in the sense that he is better, more inspired, and so a more complete vehicle of God to the world than others have been. He differs from us, not in degree, but in kind; as the half divine parentage under which he enters the world most certainly indicates. He is in such a sense God, or God manifested, that the unknown term of his nature, that which we are most in doubt of, and about which we are least capable of any positive affirmation, is the human".²

It was this last sentence which aroused the storm of criticism.

Bushnell believed that, as far as his own day was concerned, the direct argument for the divinity of Christ would be convincing "if it were not for the speculative difficulties encountered by an acknowledgment of his super-human quality".³ He even goes so far as to suggest that over-speculation and the resulting formulation of dogma was responsible for the divinity of Christ first being questioned.

1. God in Christ - p.122.

2. Ibid. - pp.122-3.

3. Ibid. - p.123.

In a sentence, which is a good example of his early lack of knowledge of historical subjects, he makes the following statement:

"In fact, it never was seriously questioned until after the easy and free representations of the scripture and of the apostolic fathers had been hardened into dogma, or converted by the Nicene theologues and those of subsequent ages, into a doctrine of the mere human understanding; an assertion of three metaphysical persons in the divine nature".¹

With this in mind, Bushnell outlines the direct argument briefly and then goes on to attempt to clear up the difficulties. His treatment of the divinity of Christ in 'God in Christ' may be said to fall into three divisions: (1) the direct argument; (2) an attempt to meet objections relating to the divine-human Christ; and (3) an attempt to clear up difficulties involved in the relation of the Trinity to the divinity of Christ. This material will be considered in the above order.

The direct argument:

Bushnell's direct argument for the divinity of Christ is of greater importance than might be inferred from the space given to it in 'God in Christ'. It is not complete in the sense of being a detailed argument but he did not intend it to be such. Our interest, however, lies in the fact that Bushnell in the middle of the nineteenth century was aware of the main lines of approach to the problem that are still useful to-day.

1. God in Christ - p.129.

First of all, he appeals to the recorded fact. He reviews the passages on such themes as the following: the pre-existence of Christ; the miraculous birth of Christ denoting the entrance into humanity of something that is distinct from it - an argument which Bushnell admits will not convince some but which has for him "the profoundest air of verity"; the incarnation; and other passages which dwell on the contents of his person such as "In whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily".

There is also the evidence that Christ, himself, was convinced of his divinity. Verses like "The Father is in me and I in Him" can only be explained on this basis. The negatives that Christ uses concerning himself are even more convincing, (e.g.) "My Father is greater than I", of which Bushnell remarks, "How preposterous for any mere human being of our race to be gravely telling the world that God is greater than he is".¹ The relation Christ assumes to the world - "I am the light of the world" - gives a similar argument. Another strong evidence is Christ's assumption of his own sinlessness, an assumption which is generally admitted in spite of the determination of the race never to believe in a perfect man.

Bushnell finds another line of approach in man's need of a divine, not a human Jesus. It is likely that he intended it to be one of many arguments strengthened by the -----
1. God in Christ - p.125.

facts of experience. Certainly, he did not mean it to be a severely logical argument as it is in Anselm.

As a last evidence, Bushnell cites the formula of baptism - "into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost". If it be conceded that the Father is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, then it follows that the Son is God. Bushnell, himself, considers that the above arguments are sufficient evidence of Christ's divinity - certainly more than enough to make it impossible to believe, as the Unitarians did, in the "simple humanity" of Jesus.

Attempt to meet objections relating to the divine-human Christ

As has been suggested, Bushnell thought that many of the objections to the divinity of Christ were "created by the supposed relations of the divine to the human, in the person of Jesus".¹ He was greatly interested in this particular phase of the subject for he considered it one of the most critical, and yet worth while, problems of his day. In a letter to his Unitarian friend, Dr. Bartol, in 1849, he said:

"Just here, I perceive, is going to be the difficulty as regards that 'reorganization' of which you speak. The tendency of German speculations and reactions, you have seen (as in Ullman's article on the 'Essence of Christianity') is towards the 'Incarnation', the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus, understanding that union in its highest sense. I am confident that Unitarianism and orthodoxy can never meet in any other point than this."²

Bushnell begins with the objection that the incar-

1. God in Christ - p.148.

2. Life and Letters - pp.219-20.

nation of God in a finite human person is per se incredible. He answers this by arguing: (1) that the highest speculative religions all have something akin to this; therefore, it cannot be wholly contradictory to natural reason; (2) that the human person has been specially fitted for such an indwelling - it "will express more of God than the whole created universe beside"; (3) that the Scriptures teach that the deepest reality of Christ lies in the fact "that he expresses the fullness of the Life of God"; (4) that there is nothing incredible in the idea of God being limited by the finite form which he takes - not even in the world of nature much less in man; (5) that "God may act a human personality without being measured by it"; and (6) to say that Christ grows, creates no greater difficulty than to say that Christ reasons and thinks.

He now comes to the deeper problem involved in the fact that Christ obeys, worships, suffers, etc., a fact which leads the Unitarian to say that Christ is human only and the "common Trinitarian" to assert that there is a human soul in the person of Jesus which comes under these limitations while the divine soul escapes.

His answer to the latter statement is that it is not true to the plain language of scripture. The point of the Scriptural declaration is "not that the man Jesus was a being under human limitations, but that he who was

in the Form of God, the real divinity, came into the finite, and was subject to human conditions".¹ Answering both Unitarian and Trinitarian, Bushnell denies that there is any real difficulty in the obedience, worship, suffering, etc., of Christ - no more difficulty than there is in our use of the name God. It is all a matter of expressing the infinite by the finite and remembering that the truth of our words is in what they express.

In his positive teaching on the subject, it cannot be said that Bushnell goes much further than this; that the reality of Christ is in what he expresses. His real deity is in expressing God to us in such a way that we are brought unto God. "To insist on going beyond expression, investigating the mystery of the person of Jesus, when it is given us only to communicate God and His love, is in fact to puzzle ourselves with the vehicle, and rob ourselves of the grace it brings."² Bushnell's final word on the relations of the divine to the human in the person of Jesus is one of reverent agnosticism: "The mystery of the divine-human must remain a mystery. I cannot fathom it. Reason itself will justify me in no such attempt."³

1. God in Christ - pp. 153-4.

Note: Charles Hodge, writing in criticism of Bushnell's book, interpreted this part of his argument in a very literal way. He argued that Bushnell to be consistent must assert "that God can be pierced with nails and spear". (See Princeton Review - Vol. 21, 1849, p.285.)

2. God in Christ - p.157.

3. God in Christ - pp.161-2.

Attempt to clear up difficulties involved in the relation
of the Trinity to the divinity of Christ

As Bushnell's teaching on the Trinity will be considered in another chapter, this section may be treated very briefly. The whole point of its relation to the divinity of Christ lies in the fact that he believed that the "old Trinitarian view" denied the proper deity of Christ:

"He (Christ) is begotten, sent, supported, directed by the Father, in such a sense as really annihilates his deity. This has been shown in a truly searching and convincing manner by Schliermacher in his historical essay on the trinity. And, indeed, you will see, at a glance, that this view of a metaphysical trinity of persons, breaks down in the very point which is commonly regarded as its excellence - its assertion of the proper deity of Christ."¹

As will be noted below, Bushnell, in his own theory laid the emphasis on the view that we know the persons of the Trinity only through their modes of revelation. In refusing to be dogmatic about their inner relations, he believed that he guarded the unity of the persons, and thus allowed for the proper divinity of Christ. Here, too, Bushnell is more negative than positive. His purpose is more to clear away possible objections than to teach a view of the Trinity in which a positive conception of Christ's divinity is held.

Criticism of the material in 'God in Christ'

In the first place, it may be said that Bushnell approached the subject with a bias which coloured his whole

1. Ibid. - pp. 134-5..

outlook on Christology. He believed that the Christology of the early church was the result, and, to some extent, the victim of speculation. But this is not in line with the facts.¹ Christology arose not through the luxury of speculation on Christ's person as a riddle for the reason but because there was an actual need for it. Intelligent Christians felt the need of giving a rational explanation of their faith. They were attempting to explain, and if need be defend, Christ's divinity. If Bushnell could have seen this, it is likely that many of his weaknesses would have been avoided.

As his theory stands, it is more an assertion of the divinity of Christ than a constructive treatise on its nature. It gives the impression that its author has avoided many questions. In this respect, his method may be said to be like Ritschl's: "to fix attention on the phenomenal aspects of reality, and to neglect consideration of the noumenal".² Bushnell's treatise is an attempt more to clear the way of possible objections than to build up a positive doctrine. This criticism has been generally acknowledged, (e.g.): Foster says that he is "reticent as to the nature of the divinity in Christ".³ Patrick Fairbairn's criticism is even stronger: "Christ according to it, (Bushnell's

1. For some of the ideas in this and other chapters, the writer is indebted to a lecture delivered by Prof. H. R. Mackintosh in New College, Edinburgh, on Feb. 1st, 1935, in a course on Nineteenth Century Dogmatics.

2. Garvie - The Ritschlian Theology - pp. 284-5.

3. A History of the New England Theology - p.409.

system as in 'God in Christ'), is but a symbol of God coming forth dramatically as a person, and giving such manifestations of God as He pleases, but making no revelation of His essential nature".¹

There is also a sense in which Bushnell affirms the divinity of Christ by proving too much - by limiting the Trinity and the true humanity of Christ. Bushnell was a man of intense feeling and there was a danger of his taking extreme positions when writing on polemical questions. Especially is this true of his thought on the divine-human Christ. Many of the objections to his view of the divinity of Christ as outlined in 'God in Christ' are from the side of the humanity of Christ. As these will be considered in the next chapter, it is not necessary to outline them here. It is well, however, to keep them in mind in estimating Bushnell's thought on the divinity of Christ.

(b) Nature and the Supernatural - 1858

So far, Bushnell's teaching on the subject of Christ's divinity has been rather disappointing. This is all the more unfortunate inasmuch as it is usually the material in 'God in Christ' that is referred to in connection with Bushnell's thought on this theme. His best thought, however, is in one of his later books, 'Nature and the Supernatural', and especially in chapter Ten en-

1. History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ (appendix to Dorner) - Div. 2, Vol. 3, p.460.

titled 'The Character of Jesus Forbids His possible Classification with Men', a chapter for which Munger makes the claim that "it has the finish of a classic, and by frequent republication has already become one."¹

The whole argument of 'Nature and the Supernatural' was in Bushnell's own day an important apologetic for the divinity of Christ. He realized the need of such a work even when he was writing 'God in Christ', and he claimed then that if it were rightly done, "the incarnation, which now appears to be a prodigy too violent or stupendous for belief, would be seen to emerge as the crowning result of a grand, systematic, orderly work, which God has been forwarding in the history and heart of the race ever since the world began".² The volume of 1858, in which he developed hints derived from Coleridge into the thesis that the supernatural is not a suspension of the laws of nature and that man is a supernatural being, accomplished the desired end.

Chapter Ten on 'The Character of Jesus' by its very nature deserves to have a more permanent influence on the theme of Christ's divinity. A brief summary of the gist of this chapter will be given before any comments of appreciation or criticism are passed. Bushnell argues that it is the moral perfection of Christ's character that

1. Horace Bushnell - p.224.

2. God in Christ - p.166.

separates Him from man and causes Him to be ranked as the supernatural divine rather than the supernatural human. Here, as in much of his most effective preaching, Bushnell follows the method of letting Christ's own life and character tell its own story.

The Scriptural account of the youth of Jesus is "the sketch of a perfect and sacred childhood". (194)¹ In His maturity, His character is distinguished from all human characters by the quality of innocence. In His religious character, He is unlike others in claiming and in being sinless. He is of this world and yet far above it. In His pretensions, He is far beyond other men of this world, yet He does not offend people by them - "an argument here for His superhumanity, which cannot be resisted". (201-2) In the passive side of His character, Jesus unites the non-resisting and gentle virtues "with a character of the severest grandeur and majesty". (203) He is just as perfect in His little trials as in His great ones. In His suffering, we see "the pathology of a super-human anguish". (206) His death moves the hard-faced soldier to say: "'Truly this was the Son of God'. As if he had said - 'I have seen men die - this is not a man. They call him Son of God - He cannot be less'". (207)

Christ also shows His superhuman character in His undertakings, work, and teaching. His purpose concerns

1. The numbers in brackets in this section indicate the numbers of the pages quoted in 'Nature and the Supernatural' (London edition 1872).

the whole human race. "It is a plan as universal in time, as it is in the scope of its object. (208) Himself possessing a frail body, He proposes to found a Kingdom of such magnitude that it will only be complete at the end of the world. He begins by laying the foundations on the lowly and dejected classes of the world. Unlike other men, He is able to do this "without eliciting any feelings of partisanship in them". (211-2) In His teaching, He is perfectly original and independent although He is uneducated and draws nothing from the stores of learning. "His teachings are just as full of divine nature as Shakspeare's of human". (214) He never falls into error nor goes to extremes nor associates Himself with any school or party. His doctrine is more a biography, a personal power, than a doctrine in the ordinary sense of the term. His moral teaching wins the assent of men by its own evidence. Although conscious that He is opposed and scoffed at by men, He is never anxious for the success of His teaching but is confident of its final success.

Unlike that of other men, the character of Jesus is not made to seem less eminent by a closer and more complete acquaintance. With Jesus, "Familiarity operates a kind of apotheosis, and the man becomes divinity, in simply being known". (222) Such is the character of Jesus, a character which we have every reason to believe did exist. Such a character, we must conclude, is sinless and is far

removed "from any possible classification in the genus humanity". (230)

There can be no doubt that the argument of this chapter of 'Nature and the Supernatural' represents a real advance over his previous work in 'God in Christ'. In a few minor details, it conflicts with the results of later exegesis but in spite of this there is much of permanent value in it. Here, as elsewhere, Bushnell shows his true religious genius by laying the emphasis on what modern theology has come to regard as one of the deepest grounds for belief in Christ's divinity. His preference, shown here, for the moral and spiritual qualities of Christ's nature is one of many illustrations that might be given of the way in which he seeks a living and organic unity in Christ's person.

The criticism of his earlier work, (viz) that he did not do justice to the nature of Christ's divinity, still applies to a lesser extent. Although he does not actually say so, it is evident that he refuses to give any place to the metaphysical categories in the person of Christ. Indeed, he writes as if the metaphysical and ethical categories are mutually exclusive. Assuming, however, that the ethical and spiritual categories are the highest, there is no reason why they should not also be metaphysical.

All through the above exposition of Bushnell's views, the close resemblance to the position of the Ritschlian

school is apparent. Bushnell's teaching on this theme is one of many illustrations that may be given of the way in which he anticipates by a number of decades the better known results of Ritschl. In an excellent article,¹ in which he compares the theology of the two men, George B. Stevens sums up their resemblances on the subject of Christ's divinity thus:

"His divinity is not to be sought, according to this view, in the vague, metaphysical categories, but in the moral and religious categories. Not 'substance', 'nature', and subsistence', but 'love', 'moral triumph', and 'forgiveness', express the Christian's sense of the value of Christ. Such is the view of the Ritschlians, and such, if I read him aright, was the view of Bushnell. Both placed a low estimate upon the creedal definitions of Christ's person, regarding them as going quite beyond Scripture warrant and as seeking to solve the insoluble, and, of course, conspicuously failing. Both exalted Christ as known in history and in experience. Both advocated a religious estimate of Christ and depreciated the subtleties of Greek speculation as an aid to faith."²

T. T. Munger in his discussion of Bushnell's 'Nature and the Supernatural' makes a comment on the argument of Chapter Ten which may be noted as being a little too free in its interpretation of Bushnell's thought. Summing up the latter's argument, he says:

"It is the perfection of his (Christ's) character that puts him beyond classification with men and into the supernatural. But having already put men in this cate-

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1. In this article of Stevens, only quotations from Bushnell's earlier position are given. The similarity, however, is much closer when Bushnell's 'Nature and the Supernatural' is also considered. Accordingly, this quotation from Stevens has been transferred to this section.
 2. American Journal of Theology - Vol. 6, p.50.

gory, he so far includes men and Jesus in the same classification, and separates him from men only by the moral perfection of his humanity. It would be untrue, however, to infer that Bushnell's thought of the person of Christ did not go further than this. But in this chapter there is an ironic tone that reveals where his thought rested as he strove to show that the perfectly human separates Jesus from men. His sympathetic reader to-day overlooks the aim, and rejoices in the pages as showing that the perfectly human is divine".¹

It is very doubtful if Horace Bushnell would have given his assent to this last statement without qualifying it.

(c) 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' and 'Forgiveness and Law'.

Bushnell did not return to the subject of the divinity of Christ in a direct way. Some idea of his later thought on this subject may be had, however, from a study of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' and 'Forgiveness and Law',² where it is kept in the background and is, perhaps, all the more clear because of this. In both these books

1. Horace Bushnell - p.227.

2. Which book of Bushnell's was Dorner referring to when he wrote in 1867 in his 'History of Protestant Theology', Vol. 2, p.499: "In a recent work, Bushnell approximates to Irving's Christology. He embraces a power of evil in the nature of Jesus"? It may have been 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', published the year before, although there seems to be little in it to justify such a charge beyond a few scattered sentences such as: "He (Christ) is even depraved or damaged in His human constitution just so far as that constitution is humanly derivative". (p.325) In the volume, 'Christ and His Salvation', (1864) in a sermon on 'The Fasting and Temptation of Jesus', there is a statement which bears some resemblance to Irving's Christology: "He (Christ) has a nature, that in part is humanly derived, so far an infected broken nature". (p.83) It is not likely, however, that Dorner would have made this the basis of his criticism. It may be noted that Bushnell knew of Irving (see 'Nature and the Supernatural' p.327) although it is improbable that he had any intimate knowledge of his Christology.

but especially in the former, his argument that the Eternal Father, as well as Christ, is in eternal vicarious sacrifice is evidence of His divinity for it is part of the proof that Christ and the Father are one. The tendency of the teaching of the forensic theories - God is propitiated, Christ propitiates; God inflicts the punishment, Christ suffers it; God exacts the debt, Christ pays it - had been to oppose God the Father to Christ the Son. They made Christ lower and different in character and purpose. The logical outcome is Unitarianism, as the facts of history bear witness. Bushnell was as anxious to avoid this error in his teaching on the atonement as in his works bearing more directly on the person of Christ.

In his last book, 'Forgiveness and Law', he discusses the divinity of Christ in one paragraph. It is worth quoting here as a conclusion to this chapter for it gives in a few words what he, in his most mature years, considered to be the best method of dealing with Christ's divinity. It is also a good illustration of a remark made by Munger in an address, 'The Secret of Horace Bushnell', delivered on the centenary of his birth. Munger attempts to find the secret in the relation of Bushnell's thought to nature - using the word in its largest sense - and he points out that this is his way of treating the divinity of Christ - "reversing the prevalent method, and approaching

it from the purely human or natural side".¹ But to
return to Bushnell's words:

"There is, in fact, no way to make out his
divinity, so effective and true as to put
him down into humanity, under the laws of
humanity, and see, from his childhood onward,
whether he stays there. The Unitarians
have been of great service to us here, for when
we start with them, at their point of born hu-
manity, we find him shooting up proudly out of
human range and level, in all the wonders of
his great life and character, and by no fit
name can we call him but Immanuel. The closer
we bring him down to manhood the more evidently
visibly, indisputably superhuman, or divine he
appears".²

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1. Bushnell Centenary - p.45.
 2. Forgiveness and Law - pp.17-8.

CHAPTER V

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

(a) Introductory

In Bushnell's Christology, the humanity of Christ is very closely connected with the divinity of Christ. It follows, then, that this chapter is intimately related to the preceding one. In none of his books does Bushnell devote a chapter or even a section to this theme. It is, however, an important subject for him and in his early books he does write at length on it while dealing with the subject of Christ's divinity. As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, he believed that some of the most difficult problems connected with the latter subject can only be solved by relating it to its kindred subject, the humanity of Christ.

Some doubt may be expressed as to the wisdom of treating Bushnell's thought on the humanity of Christ in a separate chapter instead of considering it under the divinity of Christ as he himself did. After due consideration, a separate chapter for each theme was decided to be the better method. Bushnell discusses the two in such an involved way that it is difficult to give a clear exposition of his thought - especially on the humanity of Christ. Separate treatment, however, comes nearer the desired end.

The material in Bushnell's writings bearing on this chapter is not extensive - only a few passages in 'God

in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology' where he discusses the divine-human Christ, and a few paragraphs in which he treats the subject incidentally in his other writings. As this material is mostly from books which are not very familiar to students of theology, quotations will be made from them more freely than would have been the case otherwise.

The first part of this chapter will be taken up with a consideration of the charge that Bushnell denies the true humanity of Christ's person. That this is a central question in any discussion on Bushnell's teaching on this theme is evident from the fact that Bushnell, himself, realized even before publication that many critics would regard his Christology as a denial of Christ's humanity. In 1848, he said:

"Perhaps it may be imagined that I intend, in holding this view of the incarnation, or the person of Christ, to deny that he had a human soul, or anything human but a human body. I only deny that his human soul, or nature, is to be spoken of, or looked upon, as having a distinct subsistence, so as to live, think, learn, worship, suffer, by itself".¹

But the charge is not so much that he consciously denied the humanity of Christ as that in emphasizing Christ's divinity he left no room for his humanity. He was aware of this as a possible criticism for he said: "The most plausible objection that can be made to this view of Christ's person is, that he is too exclusively divine to make an effectual

1. God in Christ - p.163.

approach to our human sympathies".¹ He dismissed the objection as being of no importance but his critics have not treated it so lightly. To what extent is the charge justified?

(b) Review of the passages bearing on this question

A satisfactory answer to this question can only be reached through an examination of the relevant passages. The most important ones will be quoted in the following paragraphs.

First of all, there is his definition of the divinity of Christ. Quotation has already been made from it, but the following sentence is important enough to bear repetition:

"He (Christ) is in such a sense God, or God manifested, that the unknown term of his nature, that which we are most in doubt of, and about which we are least capable of any positive affirmation, is the human."²

This, in itself, was enough to arouse the suspicions of the orthodox theologians of his own day.

His explanation of the sinlessness of Christ is based on an inadequate conception of what humanity involves:

"Accordingly, if the man Jesus never makes the experiment of sin, it must be because the divine is so far uppermost in him as to suspend the proper manhood of his person. He does not any longer act the man; practically speaking, the man sleeps in him. It is as if the man were not there, and judging only from the sinlessness of his life, we should make no account of the human element in his nature. He acts the divine, not the human, and the only true reality in him, as far as moral conduct is concerned, is the divine."³

1. God in Christ - p.165.

2. Ibid. - p.125.

3. Ibid. - p.126.

No doubt, Bushnell did not intend that this paragraph should be taken literally, but, to say the least, some of his phrases are unfortunate in that they are bound to lead to a wrong impression of Christ's humanity.

Another statement, evidently directed at the Unitarians but which caused the orthodox theologians much concern is as follows:

"We want Jesus as divine, not as human; least of all, do we want Him as the human, still out of humanity and above it, as held by many Unitarians. It is God that we want, to know Him, to be near Him, to have His feeling unbosomed to us.¹ As to the real human, we have had enough of that".¹

In his discourse on the 'Atonement', published in 'God in Christ', there are passages which reveal in an incidental way how Bushnell tended to think of Christ's humanity as being less real than His divinity, (e.g.): "Consider, I answer, that in the outward humanity of Jesus, there is held, in some close and mysterious union, a divine nature".²

So far, all the quotations have been from 'God in Christ'; they indicate that Bushnell's first writings on Christology did not give a very definite place to the humanity of Christ. It is significant that in his second book, 'Christ in Theology', a reply to the critics of the first, more consideration is given to the question, although even here, the statements are not altogether satisfactory.

1. God in Christ - pp. 126-7

2. Ibid. - p.231.

After stating that Christ is "externally viewed, a union of God and man, whose object is to humanize the conception of God, and so to express or communicate God", he asks the question: "But is there any distinct human soul in the person of Christ?"¹ Part of his answer is:

"The human element is nothing to me, save as it brings me God, or discovers to me, a sinner, the patience and brotherhood of God, as a Redeemer from sin. As to the man, the human soul, I see men enough and meet with human souls enough elsewhere."²

There would have been less criticism if he had answered his question with a blunt 'No'.

The direction of his thought is evident from his argument that nothing is gained by postulating a human soul in the nature of Christ:

"And suppose we come at last to the clear and fixed opinion that a human soul was in the person of Jesus, but was never distinctly active and never will be - what then have we done? Why, we have discovered with infinite labor that a certain drop is in the sea - nothing more! The sea is not any larger, or purer, or stronger; for if the reality of Christ be God, and God is infinite, what more or better is he for this drop of humanity that is merged thus eternally in the boundless ocean of his nature?"³

Bushnell makes no positive denial of a human soul in the person of Christ. He prefers to avoid the question but when he does touch on it, he usually falls back into a neutral position:

"There may be a human soul here or there may not - that is a matter with which we have nothing to do, and about which we have not only no right to affirm, but no right to inquire".⁴

1. Christ in Theology - p.93.

2. Ibid. - p.94.

3. Ibid. - p.95.

4. Ibid. - p.96.

In the following, he is a little more conservative:

"I am quite free to admit that, when the question has been up for settlement before the church, whether Christ had a human soul or not, the weight of opinion has been upon the affirmative side; and if one or the other must be held or decided, the decision has been rightly, or at least advantageously, turned on this side. For, if we say that there is no human soul in the person of the Savior, then we shall not use or find any place for using a large class of representations that present him on the human or subject side of his mystery; and so the incarnation itself will vanish as a fact. While, on the other hand, if we say that he has a distinct human soul, all these terms will be used only with a violent over-speculative meaning."¹

Bushnell has been criticized for his statements on the subject of the eternal humanity of Christ but it is generally conceded that he was nearer to the truth on this question than his critics were. In his 'Christ in Theology', he admitted that he had difficulty in forming a satisfactory conception "of the eternity of the human nature, or the glorified humanity of Jesus"² Perhaps, it was this statement which led Dorner to say: "Bushnell is just as incapable of ascribing an eternal humanity to Christ as the old Patripassians".³ But this is really unfair to Bushnell inasmuch as he is in line with church tradition on this question. As H. R. Mackintosh has said, "The Church has never affirmed that the humanity of Christ was real prior to the birth in Bethlehem".⁴

1. Christ in Theology - pp. 104-5.

2. Ibid. - p.112.

3. Doctrine of the Person of Christ, Div.11, Vol. 111, p.309.

4. The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ - p.457.

(c) Conclusion formed from this review

The general conclusion that must be formed from a review of the above passages is that Bushnell's teaching on the subject of the humanity of Christ is not altogether satisfactory. There are, indeed, passages other than the ones quoted above which show that Bushnell made important contributions to the subject. They will be examined later in the chapter, but it may be stated here that they are not such as to affect the conclusion formed regarding the charge, made against Bushnell. When Bushnell's teaching as a whole is considered, it must be admitted that those who would have brought him to trial for his book 'God in Christ' had considerable ground for some of their theological criticisms, although not sufficient to justify an ecclesiastical trial.¹

The charge is that Bushnell denied the true humanity of Christ. It is true that he refused to affirm or to deny anything in regard to the real nature of Christ's humanity. But for all practical purposes, this meant that he did not do justice to it - especially in view of the fact that he admitted that the subject is one of great importance.²

So far as the implications of his teaching are concerned, he

1. Some idea of the severity of these criticisms may be inferred from the fact that Charles Hodge's review of 'God in Christ', said to be "the most courteous and discriminating of all the reviews proceeding from centres of theologic authority" (Life and Letters p.215) accused Bushnell of teaching the heresies of "the docetae", "the Apollinarians", and "the Eutychians", all in the discourse on the divinity of Christ. (See Princeton Review, 1849, pp.290-2)

2. See Christ in Theology - p.110.

may be said to be an Apollinarian but the term must be used very carefully, for he is not one in other respects and the term is not a fair one to apply to a theologian of the nineteenth century. Bushnell is nearer to Schleiermacher on the subject of Christ's humanity than he is to any other theologian.

It may be noted that representative theological writers, whatever their own differences, have agreed in regarding Bushnell's Christology as inadequate so far as his treatment of the humanity of Christ is concerned. In 1890, Dorner said:

"The whole newer time is true to the lead of the Reformation, in emphasizing earnestly the perfectness of the humanity of Christ in body and soul. Only a few (Bushnell inter alia) permit themselves to change the Logos into a human soul; this is to make the soul a mere temporary form or manifestation of the life of the Logos".¹

George P. Fisher, writing in 1896, said of Bushnell's Christology: "The existence of a human spiritual nature, if not expressly denied, was held to be practically of no account. It was substantially the Apollinarian idea".² If Bushnell's treatment of the humanity of Christ offended the orthodox theologians of his own day, it has also failed to please liberal thinkers of more recent times; (e.g.) J. W. Buckham, writing in 1919, makes the following criticism:

"He (Bushnell) reopens the chasm between the divine and human, which he had closed by declaring man himself

1. System of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 3, p.254.

2. History of Christian Doctrine, - p.439.

a supernatural being, and places Jesus wholly and unreservedly on the divine side of it".¹

(d) Explanation of his inadequate treatment of the theme

It is possible to give some explanation of Bushnell's failure to do justice to Christ's humanity. In the first place, it may be said that his difficulties result partly from his treating the humanity of Christ merely as a means and not also as an end. Bushnell, himself, admitted that Christ's humanity was only a means to the end in his thought: "the human element is nothing to me, save as it brings me God, or discovers to me, a sinner, the patience and brotherhood of God, as a Redeemer from sin."² In his anxiety to show that the result of the incarnation is the revelation of God's love, he forgets that it is also the entrance into humanity of the Son of God in such a way that the man Jesus appears.

A great deal of Bushnell's difficulty in Christological problems lies in the fact that he approached them with an overwhelming sense of God. As Fisher has said, in Bushnell's thought "the human is at best but a transparent glass, through which we look directly into the heart of God".³ The one idea which runs like a thread through all his thinking on the atonement, (viz.) that it is God Himself who speaks, feels, acts, and suffers in Christ, also

1. Progressive Religious Thought in America - p.28

2. Christ in Theology - p.94.

3. History of Christian Doctrine - p.444.

reveals its influence in his Christology and naturally takes away from the perfect integrity of Christ's humanity. This is, of course, a criticism which is not peculiar to Bushnell but which must be made of all Patripassian theories.

Another explanation may be found in his reaction from the Christology of his day. Afraid of asserting a "distinct or distinctly active subsistence in the person of Christ" - a view which has never been held by any theologian of note although the New England theologians may have given the impression of teaching something similar to it - Bushnell went to the other extreme. In his reaction from the "two nature" theory, he tended to think of the two natures as really one, but by one he meant the divine nature.

It is rather curious as well as significant that Bushnell, while he helped to bridge the gulf between the orthodox theologians and the Unitarians in New England, so far as the subject of the Trinity was concerned, should have stood further from Unitarianism on the question of Christ's humanity than did his orthodox friends. In his reaction to the "two nature" theory, he went the opposite direction to that held by the Unitarians.

The element of Eastern thought in his theology also helps to explain his failure to do justice to Christ's humanity. T. T. Munger claimed that Bushnell's work "was

characterized by a mingling of the thought of the first three centuries, and of the modern spirit which had found its way from Germany into England through Coleridge. The two did not always agree very well, and the latter is the predominating feature in all his writings."¹ There are, however, times when the Eastern element is uppermost and one such time is when he is writing on the subject of Christ's humanity. For as Rashdall has said, "Western theology has always asserted the reality of Christ's humanity more heartily and consistently than Eastern theology."²

F. W. Robertson of Brighton once enumerated six principles on which he taught. The fourth is: "That belief in the Human character of Christ's Humanity must be antecedent to belief in His Divine origin."³ The absence of this principle in Bushnell's thought helps to explain his difficulty in arriving at a proper conception of Christ's humanity. For, instead of rising from a knowledge of the historic Christ to the idea of God, he moves from his idea of God to his conception of Christ. At any rate, his interpretation of the person of Christ is coloured by his previous conception of God. The result is that there is something very artificial about the way in which he takes Christ from above and puts "him down into humanity".⁴

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1. Library of the World's Best Literature, Vol. 5, p.2909.
 2. The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology - pp.450-1.
 3. Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson - p.274.
 4. Forgiveness and Law - p.17.

There are times when Bushnell does come near to this principle of Robertson (e.g.) in his 'Nature and the Supernatural'. A comparison of the following quotations reveals just how near the two theologians were at this point:

"He (Christ) grows sacred, peculiar, wonderful, divine, as acquaintance reveals Him. At first He is only a man, as the senses report him to be; knowledge, observation, familiarity, raise Him into the God-man. He grows pure and perfect ..." ¹

"Live with Him (Christ) till he becomes a living thought - ever present - and you will find a reverence growing up which compares with nothing else in human feeling". ²

This quotation, however, is not typical of Bushnell's Christology - especially of his more controversial writings. There are times when he hovered near to the position of Robertson but his Sabellian bias usually led him away from it at the very times when it would have served him best.

(e) Ways in which he enriched the idea of Christ's humanity

Most of what has been said so far in this chapter is adverse criticism. But, as has been suggested already, Bushnell made some important contributions to the subject. It would almost seem that he did not work out his views on Christ's person to their logical conclusion. At any rate, there is a curious mixture of weakness and strength in his Christology. The strong points will now be considered.

There is a place in his teaching for the idea that the expression of the supernatural or divine side of Christ's

1. Nature and the Supernatural - p.223.

2. Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson - p.279.

nature is just the expression of the perfection of His humanity. It is true that in his earlier books much of what he says is almost contradictory of this. Yet even there the idea may be found bursting out now and then for Bushnell was never very systematic in his thinking. In 'God in Christ' he says:

"God does not weep, but it will be no absurd thing for Jesus to weep, and that, too, in the way of revealing or expressing God. So if he renders worship, it creates no difficulty which does not belong to his simple identification with the human, as truly as to his worship. He is only absurd when he acts the heathen, and refuses to worship in the way of expressing God. To do this effectively, he must act the human perfectly - that is, he must worship."¹

The same thing is even more evident in the tenth chapter of his 'Nature and the Supernatural'. Seeking to prove that Jesus was supernatural, he always starts from the assumption that Jesus was at least human. Thus, he speaks of "the more than human character of Jesus" and of "His superhumanity".² Again, it may be noted that the tendency of one of the most basic principles of this book is to bridge the gulf between the human and the divine by declaring man to be supernatural. He says:

"the moment we begin to conceive ourselves rightly, we become ourselves supernatural In ourselves we discover a tier of existences that are above nature, and, in all their most ordinary actions, are doing their will upon it. The very idea of our personality is that of a being not under the law of cause and effect, a being supernatural."³

1. God in Christ - p.161.

2. Nature and the Supernatural - pp.192 and 201.

3. Ibid. - p.23.

This argument carried to its logical conclusion meant that it was easier for Bushnell to identify Christ's perfect humanity with the expression of His divinity. If he had consistently thought of it in this way, he might have avoided many difficult problems.

Although on the whole, and especially in his earlier books, he was inclined to disfavour all attempts to open "the interior psychology of Christ's person"¹ he did something to bring into prominence an idea that was lacking in traditional theology. It is the idea of development and gradual coalescence in the unity of the divine and the human in Christ. In Bushnell, it is a good example of the benefits he received from his refusal to be too analytic in his Christology. It was an idea that appealed to him for it enabled him to bring out the living and organic unity of Christ's person.

The best illustration of this idea in his theology is found in what is naturally one of his more "orthodox" books, the volume of sermons, 'Christ and His salvation'. In a sermon on the temptation of Jesus, he says:

"As He was human, so there was to be a humanly progressive opening of His mind, and a growing pre-sentiment of His great future. All which makes the revelation, when it comes, only the greater and more astounding, because He is just so much more capable of taking the fit impression of it. Nor does it make any difference what particular account we frame of His person. If there is a divine-nature soul, and a human-nature soul, existing together in Him as one person, that one person must be in the human type,

1. Christ in Theology - p.96.

unfolding by a human process, toward the consciously great Messiahship He is going to fulfil. If He is pure divinity incarnate, He is not simply housed or templated in the flesh, but inhumanized, categorized in humanity, there to grow, to learn, to be unfolded, under human conditions of progress."¹

Somewhat the same idea may be found in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' in his teaching that Christ's human experience was just His own progressive training in the life of holiness and love.² The idea of a gradual development in the work of Christ was at the heart of his teaching on the atonement; this fact must have helped to introduce the idea to others.

As the above paragraph suggests, there is some ground for the statement that Bushnell's teaching on the subject of the atonement did more in an indirect way to emphasize the true humanity of Christ than did his books on Christology. In shifting the emphasis from the death to the life of Christ, and in taking many of his most effective illustrations from the Gospel narratives, he gave impetus to a movement which was bound to result in due time in the enrichment of the idea of Christ's humanity. His teaching of the moral power theory tended to have a similar effect. In bringing out the fact that the ethical principles underlying Christ's actions and those of all good men are the same, he helped to make plain the reality of Christ's true humanity. It almost seems as if it was through his thought

1. Christ and His Salvation - p.79.

2. See 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' - Part 2, Chap. 4.

Note: This line of thought is also well expressed in a sermon. See 'Christ and His Salvation' - p.225.

on the work of Christ that he came to realize the need of asserting the true humanity of Christ. In 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', he says:

"In this taking of the flesh, He becomes a true member of the race, subject to all the corporate liabilities of His bad relationship. He is even depraved or damaged in his human constitution just so far as that constitution is humanly derivative. For he was the Son, not of an immaculate, but of a maculate motherhood; otherwise the humanity assumed were only a dainty and merely ideal embodiment, such as rather mocks our sympathy than draws it. Besides, he would be tempted in all points like as we are, and give us to see how He bears himself in our lot."¹

All this suggests that Bushnell wrote most sympathetically on the humanity of Christ when he was treating it indirectly or when he was considering its practical results rather than its theological bearings. Thus, it is in his volumes of sermons and in his later books, 'Nature and the Supernatural', 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', and 'Forgiveness and Law' that his kindest treatment is found. Munger has said that "Despite Bushnell's uncertain handling of the humanity of Christ in theological analysis, upon no other theme does he write with so profound sympathy".² Any one of the above quotations might be given in illustration of this statement but the following is used because it is from a sermon which has not been noticed so far. Bushnell discovers one of the strongest arguments for the true humanity of Christ in what most writers have considered

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.325.

2. Horace Bushnell - p.224.

to be of little theological significance - the sleep of Jesus. In the sermon, 'Christ Asleep', he says:

"The very thing proposed in the person of Jesus is to make an approach transcending any possible explication by us - viz., to humanize divinity; that by means of a nature, fellow to our own, He may bring Himself within our range, and meet our feeling by a feeling formally humanized in Himself. And in order to do this, there must be no doubt of His humanity; He must not be simply templated in a human body, but He must make His humanity complete by that last, most convincing evidence, the fact of sleep."¹

He even regards the argument for the humanity of Christ derived from His sleep as on a par with the argument for His divinity derived from His character: "Divine He must be, for His character is deifically spotless and perfect; human he must be, for He sleeps like a man."² And again, he says: "If He sleeps a man, He wakes a God."³

The question of the extent of the change in Bushnell's views on the humanity of Christ is a difficult one on which to come to a definite decision. Most of the passages, in which he treats the subject directly are in his early books. The material in his later books must be judged in the light of the statement that he wrote more sympathetically on the subject while discussing it incidentally. Even when allowance is made for this, however, it seems that there is considerable ground for the belief that in his later years he had advanced to a position free from many of his early weaknesses.

1. Christ and His Salvation - p.122.

2. Ibid. - p.123.

3. Ibid. - p.130.

Perhaps, then, the last word on Bushnell's treatment of the humanity of Christ must be from the point of view of his volumes of sermons and his writings on the atonement. They represent his mature thought and they have been the most widely read of his books. Judged in the light of these books - not in the light of ones like 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology', there is a good deal of truth in Foster's estimate of his contribution to New England theology:

"He saved for orthodoxy, which in reaction from Unitarian humanitarianism was about to believe nothing but the deity of Christ and so lose his humanity and lose Christ, Christ's true, con-substantial humanity; and this was an immense and priceless service. We need the divine Christ to bear our sins and uphold us by his almighty power; but we need fully as much the condescension, pitying sympathy, and fraternal love of our Elder Brother, the human Christ. We owe our present realization of this side of Christ very largely to Horace Bushnell."¹

1. A History of the New England Theology - p.410.

CHAPTER VI
THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY

(a) Introductory

No discussion of the person of Christ is complete which does not take into consideration the place of Christ in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The two subjects are so closely related that it is impossible to consider one of them adequately without knowing something about the other. Thinking on the Trinity has always influenced thinking on Christology and vice-versa. In studying Bushnell's thought on the subject of the Trinity, we may expect to find light on some of the problems of his Christology. He himself, believed that some of the deepest problems of Christology are connected with the problem of the Trinity.¹

It would be natural, too, to expect Bushnell's thought on the Trinity to have had an important bearing on his treatment of the atonement. As Dale has said, "What may be described as the internal and mutual relations of the Trinity must contain the ultimate solution of some of the questions suggested by the relation of Christ in His redemptive work to the Father".² In Bushnell's case, however, we shall be disappointed if we expect too much, for he does not care to examine the "internal and mutual

1. See God in Christ - pp.128-9.

2. R. W. Dale - The Atonement - p.6.

relations of the Trinity" in the sense that Dale had in mind. There are, however, ways in which his thought on the Trinity did have a bearing on his treatment of the atonement.

The purpose of this chapter is: first, to indicate briefly the situation which brought the problem of the Trinity to the forefront for Bushnell; second, to state in broad outline his view of the Trinity as first expounded; third, to trace any development of his thought as reflected in later books; and fourth, to estimate and to criticize briefly his position. All through the emphasis will be laid on the material dealing with the place of Christ in his statement of the Trinity.

(b) His introduction to the problem

During the early part of the nineteenth century, the Christian Trinity was a leading subject of discussion in theological circles in New England, and naturally Bushnell became interested in it in his early years. Even before beginning his studies in theology, he admitted that he had doubts on the subject. His attitude, then, was prophetic of his more mature years:

"When the preacher touches the Trinity and when logic shatters it all to pieces, I am all at the four winds. But I am glad I have a heart as well as a head. My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Ghost - and one just as much as the other. My heart says the Bible has a Trinity for me, and I mean to hold by my heart".¹

1. Life and Letters - p.56.

As this indicates, Bushnell never felt a temptation to go over to the Unitarians. But on the other hand, he found little peace in the conception of the Trinity then prevalent. He came to believe that the New England divines had drifted away from the historical teaching on the subject to what he later described as a "provincialism, a kind of theological patois".¹ Two things in the teaching, then current, disturbed him - its presumptiveness and its inconsistency. The account, based on a metaphysical conception of three persons in the Godhead, seemed to him to imply tritheism and there can be no doubt that many unconsciously came very near to such a position in their reaction to Unitarianism. Like Schleiermacher, Bushnell felt that many Christians, striving for nothing but the three, believed in a metaphysical tri-personality - "three real living persons in the interior nature of God; that is, three consciousnesses, wills, hearts, understandings".² Again, many thought of the three persons in such a way as to annihilate the true divinity of Christ.³ And many, who avoided the dangers of tritheism, fell into the opposite one of allowing the threeness to become clouded by the unity because they failed to give a specific content to the term "person".⁴ Bushnell's problem was to give an explanation

1. Christ in Theology - p.170.

2. God in Christ - p.130.

Note: Charles Hodge denied that the Church ever taught this. But there was likely a difference between what the Church taught and what many New England people believed.

3. Ibid. - p.134. (Princeton Review, 1849, p.278)

4. Ibid. - p.133.

of the Christian Trinity free from all these dangers. He considered it a reasonable task, for he believed that the objections to the Trinity came from a wrong understanding of it.

(c) His method of approach

Bushnell begins with two principles in mind: (1) "that the Trinity we seek will be a Trinity that results of necessity from the revelation of God to man"; and (2) that it is not man's duty to attempt "to fathom the interior being of God, and tell how it is composed".¹ He is determined to know only that which has an experimental basis. His definition of the trinity in a letter written in 1849 is characteristic: "The trinity is the algebraic formula of experience".²

For material with which to begin his study, Bushnell believes that three facts must be given full consideration: (1) "the strict personal unity of God - one mind, will, consciousness"; (2) "the three of scripture"; and (3) "the living person walking the earth, in the human form, called Jesus Christ - a subject, suffering being, whose highest and truest reality is that he is God".³

(d) The argument of 'God in Christ' 1849

In his first book on the subject, Bushnell begins

1. God in Christ - p.137.
2. Life and Letters - p.218.
3. God in Christ - p.136.

by showing how incomprehensible the Divine Being is when we try "to form the distinctest notion possible of God, as existing in Himself, and unrevealed".¹ He does this by pointing out that the infinitude of God's attributes seems to clash with His personality. Of course, the whole attempt seems rather meaningless, but Bushnell meant it to serve as an introduction to his argument for the need of a trinity as a mode of revelation. Only through the medium of three modes of personal action can God disclose Himself and come near to the apprehension of human creatures.

It is the Logos who is the self-revealing faculty of the Deity. "It is in this view that the Word, or Logos, elsewhere called Christ, or the Son of God is represented as the Creator of the worlds".² Before the incarnation, God had revealed Himself in human form to a certain extent - even man's nature is evidence of that. But it was possible to exhibit more of God in human form. As the spirit of man was made in the image of God, so man's bodily form has some a priori relation to God's own nature and is the most expressive type of Him. Our race would have been the revelation of God's beauty and truth but it became blemished through sin. God reclaims it in the incarnation - "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ... This is Christ whose proper deity

1. God in Christ - p.137.

2. Ibid. - p.146.

or divinity we have proved".¹

The result of the incarnation is a double impersonation - that of the Father and that of the Son. The one exists because of the other and both are correspondent or relative terms. By appearing in the finite, Christ "calls out into thought, as residing in heaven, and possessing celestial exaltation, the Father, who is, in fact, the Absolute Being brought into a lively, conversible, definite (therefore finite) form of personal conception".²

So far, the revelation of God is in His character, feeling and truth. We need a further revelation of God in act working in us. To accomplish this, the natural image spirit is clothed with a personal activity. He, the Holy Spirit,

"is conceived, sometimes, as sent by the Father; sometimes, as proceeding from the Father and Son; sometimes as shed forth from the Son in his exaltation; always as a Divine Agency, procured by the Son, and representing, in the form of an operation within us, that grace which he reveals as feeling and intention towards us."³

The revelation is now complete:

"The Father plans, presides, and purposes for us; the Son expresses his intended mercy, proves it, brings it down to the level of a fellow feeling; the Spirit works within us the beauty he reveals, and the glory beheld in his Life. The Father sends the Son, the Son delivers the grace of the Father; the Father dispenses, and the Son procures the Spirit; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son to fulfil the purpose of one, and the expressed feeling of the other; each and all together dramatize and bring forth into life about

1. God in Christ - p.147.

2. Ibid. - p.169.

3. Ibid. - p.172.

us that Infinite One, who, to our mere thought, were no better than Brama sleeping on eternity and the stars."¹

Near the beginning of the discourse in which he discusses the trinity, Bushnell gives the impression that he objects to the use of the term 'person'. This impression, however, is corrected in a few paragraphs near the end. In answer to objections against the use of the term, he gives a clear statement: "The Three of scripture do appear under the grammatic forms which are appropriate to person - I, Thou, He, We, and They; and if it be so, I really do not perceive the very great license taken by our theology, when they are called three persons".² Charles Hodge, while condemning Bushnell's book as a whole, said that this statement should satisfy the most orthodox Trinitarian.³

As if he is afraid that the above quotation will lead to his position being misunderstood, he again declares the need of abstaining from assigning to the persons of the trinity an interior metaphysical nature. As for the question of a modal trinity, he prefers to leave it an open one, lest he should deny more than he is justified in denying: "Perhaps, I shall come nearest to the simple, positive idea of the trinity here main-

1. Ibid. - p.173.

2. God in Christ - p.174.

3. Princeton Review, Vol. 21, 1849, pp.260-1. Note: Munger's reference to this statement is unfair to Hodge as he omits from Hodge's quotation of Bushnell the significant part. See Munger's 'Horace Bushnell' p.147.

tained, if I call it an Instrumental Trinity, and the persons Instrumental Persons. There may be more in them than this, which let others declare when they find it."¹

He is very guarded in his discussion of the eternity of the three persons:

"Undoubtedly the distinction of the Word, or the power of self-representation in God thus denominated, is eternal. And in this, we have a permanent ground of possibility for the threefold impersonation, called trinity. Accordingly, if God has been eternally revealed, or revealing Himself to created minds, it is likely always to have been and always to be as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."²

Thus Bushnell, so far as 'God in Christ' is concerned, does not really meet the question, answering it only from the point of view of revelation.

(e) Christ in Theology - 1851

The first part of the chapter on the trinity in 'Christ in Theology' is mainly a re-statement and a defence of the argument of 'God in Christ', so it need not be closely reviewed here. The more important part of the book for our purpose is that which reveals a development in Bushnell's thought on the subject of the trinity. That there is such a development is admitted by most students of Bushnell's theology (e.g.) Williston Walker speaks of 'Christ in Theology' as a defence of the former book "with some modifications in his views espec-

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1. God in Christ - p.175.
 2. God in Christ - p.177.

ially regarding the Trinity".¹

Even in the first part, however, there are passages that reveal the characteristics of his thought. Although he is very careful not to make assertions regarding the "interior psychology of the persons", he does say that 'whatever else be true, they must be received as the One.' This is a principle for which he is over-jealous and his anxiety to defend it at all costs explains many of his weaknesses. He does claim to confess just "as much ignorance of the unity as of the threeness"², but, taking his words as they are, it is doubtful if this is so. As Bushnell, himself, should have known from his close touch with the Unitarian controversy, it is far easier even for a Trinitarian to be more positive in his affirmation of the unity than of the "threeness" in God.

In his discussion of the eternity of the three persons, he is as cautious as before. He does go as far as to say: "I feel no difficulty, therefore, in speaking of the persons Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as eternal".³ In another sentence, he uses the word if to qualify his statement: "Even if there be some unimaginable threeness in the divine nature, which is immanent there"⁴ The persons may be eternal or they may not; we do not know -

1. Bushnell Centenary - p.29.

2. Christ in Theology - p.144.

3. Ibid. - p.169.

4. Ibid. - p.167.

all we do know is that they are incidental to revelation. We do not even know whether there will be a time when the distinction of the persons will not be necessary to revelation.

It is in the section in which Bushnell reviews the Nicene creed that development in his thought may be most clearly seen. At the time of writing his 'God in Christ', he considered himself quite unorthodox. As he put it a few years later in a letter:

"I did suppose myself, when I published my first book, that without rejecting a trinity as one of the highest and even most practical truths of religion, I had broken loose from any particular doctrine of trinity contained in the so-called orthodox formulas".¹

In the interval, he had studied the Nicene creed with the result that in 'Christ in Theology' he could write:

"It is a pleasant confirmation to me of the view I have given of the trinity, that, wholly disregarding, and, as I supposed, rejecting the Nicene doctrine; discussing the subject anew, under a different method, and without reference to anything but the simple conditions of the subject itself; I yet seem only to have reproduced, in a different form, what is really the substantial import of that doctrine".²

In reality, however, that study had made a deeper impression than Bushnell, himself, realized, for he now gives his assent to ideas in the Nicene creed which were not included in his first exposition of the trinity.

There is his acceptance of the self-expression of

1. Life and Letters - p.335.

2. Christ in Theology - p.177.

God as it is stated in the classic phrase: "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God".¹ He also makes much of the "eternal generation" clause "begotten not made", understanding it to mean "not that the Son is 'begotten' in the past tense; but is ever and from eternity being begotten".² Again, he goes so far as to say: "I begin with a trinity generated in time, ascending from it, with a certain measured confidence, to the conviction that the conditions and grounds out of which it is generated in time are eternal, and that so it is itself eternal".³ There is also the idea of the subordination of the Son to the Father although not in the Arian sense of the inferiority of attributes. It is more in the idea of the Son being the revealer: "the Son is to the Father as expression to substance".⁴

The way in which Bushnell at this time regarded his relation to Schleiermacher is significant. In the earlier volume, he said of Schleiermacher's Critique on Sabellius:

"The general view of the trinity given in that article coincides, it will be discovered, with the view I have presented; though the reasonings are not, in all points, the same".⁵

Two years later, he said:

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid. - p.182.
 3. Christ in Theology - p.184.
 4. Ibid. - p.181.
 5. God in Christ - pp.111-2.

"Schleiermacher and his translator both assume the possibility of entering into the interior nature of God, and forming an authorized judgment concerning the trinity as predicable of it. This I deny, and am thus left far behind by them both. The judgment of the German critic is that the One becomes Three in the process of revelation, and that the three are only media of revelation. This is modalism."¹

In many ways, the last quotation may seem very much in agreement with 'God in Christ'. This may be admitted. But the point is not so much that Bushnell did not make the above denial in his first book as that whereas he then emphasized his close relation to Schleiermacher's position, he is now anxious to stress his divergences from the German theologian. Unconsciously, he has moved nearer the Nicene creed.

(f) Letter to Dr. Hawes - 1854

That Bushnell was moving closer and closer to the Nicene creed is indicated by his correspondence in 1854 with Dr. Hawes, a neighbouring minister. This man had become estranged from Bushnell during the time of the controversy over 'God in Christ', and this correspondence was an attempt at a reconciliation. That Bushnell's Unitarian friends regarded it as a recantation on his part signifies much.² In one letter he writes that he has discovered that instead of rejecting the Nicene doctrine, he "had actually come into it, only from another quarter". He also states that he is able to give his assent to its

1. Christ in Theology - p.119.

2. See Life and Letters - p.338.

formula of trinity, "in its true historic sense, as a doctrine of eternal generation, assenting, of course, to the Westminster Confession which is only an abridged and less complete exposition of the same."¹

(g) Article: The Christian Trinity a Practical Truth - 1854

Later in the same year, Bushnell contributed an article to the 'New Englander', entitled 'The Christian Trinity a Practical Truth'.² It is by far his best work on the subject. Perhaps, the reason for this is that it is neither an attack on current theories, nor a defence of his earlier position, nor a review of an accepted creed, but a straight forward clear exposition of the views to which he, himself, had been led.

His apologetic for the use of the terms "three persons" is to be commended. The idea of the trinity is needed to avoid two extreme dangers. The one- pantheism - denies that the term "person" can be used: but every true Christian feels the need of the term. The other - Unitarianism - tries to avoid the dangers associated with the use of the plural by declaring that there is only one person in the Godhead. But the truth is that nothing is lost and much is gained by the Trinitarian idea. "As we can say that God is a person without any real denial of

1. Ibid. - p.335.

2. This article was re-published in America in the volume 'Building Eras' - pp.106-149, 1881, and in London in 1882 in 'Pulpit Talent' - pp.94-137.

His infinity, so we can say that He is three persons without any breach of His unity".¹

The Christian Trinity is practical not in the sense of presenting something to be practiced, but as an "instrument of thought, action, self-application"² in the same way that language is practical. The idea serves two main purposes: (1) "It saves the dimensions or the practical infinity of God, consistently with His personality";³ (2) "It is the instrument and co-efficient of a supernatural grace or redemptive economy".⁴

Returning again to the question of the eternity of the three persons, he reaches his most orthodox position:

"What, then, is it that gives us the impression, when we speak of God's personality, that it is an eternal property in Him, a something which appertains to the Divine idea itself? It can be only that by some interior necessity (he uses italics), He is thus accommodated in His action to the finite; for what He does by the necessity of His nature as truly pertains to His idea, and is as truly inherent in Him, as if it were the form of His Divine substance itself. And precisely here we come upon the Nicene Trinity."⁵

Other significant phrases are those in which he speaks of God as "eternally three-ing Himself" and as "datelessly and eternally becoming three".⁶

The following sentences are also worth quoting in full for they help to sum up Bushnell's article:

"If, then, we dare to assume what is the deepest, most

1. Pulpit Talent - p.103.

2. Ibid. - p.98.

3. Pulpit Talent - p.105.

4. Ibid. - p.114.

5. Ibid. - p.122.

6. Ibid. - p.123.

adorable fact of God's nature, that He is a Being infinite, inherently related in act to the finite, otherwise impossible ever to be found in that relation, thus and therefore a Being who is everlastingly three-ing Himself in His action, to be and to be known as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost from eternity to eternity, we are brought out full upon the Christian Trinity, and that in the simple line of practical inquiry itself."¹

It is true that the above means a Trinity whose ground of possibility is a dependence upon, or relation to, the finite rather than a trinity "belonging to the eternal necessary activity of the Divine Being because it is the realization to Himself of His own nature".² It is an admission of immanence related at the same time to revelation in such a way as to leave a way of escape. Still, it is much nearer to a real immanence than the position which Bushnell held in 1848.

It may be noted, too, that Bushnell in this article was careful to guard against his usual weakness - his tendency to fight shy of tritheism in such a way as to go to the other extreme. He says: "We must have no jealousy of the three, as if they were going to drift us away from the unity or from reason".³ This, too, is an indication of his close approach to the orthodox position.

(h) References to the Trinity in his later books

In his later works, Bushnell does not treat the subject of the trinity directly, so it is almost impossible

1. Ibid. - p.124.

2. Fisher - History of Christian Doctrine - p.441.

3. Pulpit Talent - p.134.

to trace the development in his thought beyond the article discussed above. He does, however, touch on the subject now and then in its relation to other themes. A few references to these passages may be included in this chapter.

In 'Nature and the Supernatural', (1858) there is a passage which reveals his tendency to put the emphasis on the practical side: "There is, in short, no intellectual machinery, in a close theorectic monotheism, for any such thing as a work of grace or supernatural redemption. In the Christian Trinity, this want is supplied".¹

In 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', (1866) the bearing of his emphasis on the oneness rather than the threeness of the Godhead may be seen to good advantage in his view of the work of Christ. There Bushnell refused to tolerate any theory which treated the atonement as a payment made by the second person to the first person of the Trinity.

In his last book, 'Forgiveness and Law', (1874) may be found an illustration of how the nightmare of tritheism overshadowed most of his thinking in the subject. Like Dionysius of Rome, Bushnell regarded tritheism as the deadliest of foes. In speaking of propitiation, he said: "Christ obtains the forgiveness of sins for us by what he does before God, acting in our behalf. Even so, by acting before God; and yet not by acting before God and by obtain-

1. Nature and the Supernatural - p.274.

ing from God, as being strictly other. That would be tritheism and not trinity".¹

Bushnell's last theory of the atonement, in which he taught that God makes cost in the matter of forgiveness, had important bearings on thought on the trinity - although as far as Bushnell himself was concerned they were not given definite expression. His theory implied that Christ was not superfluous to God - he was and is a real necessity to the Father. Indeed, Bushnell's idea of the eternal atonement as outlined in both 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' and 'Forgiveness and Law', but especially in the latter, has room for the idea that Christ is not merely a necessity for revelation but is also indispensable to the inner being of God. This position, if it had been worked out to its logical conclusion, would have made it possible to classify Bushnell's theory as ontological.

(i) Estimate and Criticism

In attempting to estimate and criticize Bushnell's contribution to the discussion of the Christian Trinity, the first question to be considered is whether he - especially in his early statements - may be classified as Sabellian? Bushnell himself gave the impression that he had great respect for Sabellius although he did not hesitate to criticize him.² The views of the critics have been widely divergent

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.57.

2. See God in Christ - p.167.

on this question. In his own day, the cry that Bushnell was Sabellian was often heard,¹ although his friends were quick to deny such statements.² In more recent years, the critics have been less extreme in their criticisms; (e.g.) Williston Walker, who described the teaching of 'God in Christ' as "a modified Sabellianism".³

It seems that the only fair conclusion is that the early critics were both right and wrong. Bushnell's early teaching on the trinity is Sabellian on some points, but on others it is far removed from Sabellianism. It is akin to the latter in its positive statements; Bushnell, however, refuses to deny what Sabellius does. It may be that Bushnell really lacks the distinctive feature of authentic Sabellianism - the successiveness of the phases and the consequent temporary being of the Divine Christ. For Sabellius, God is not Father, Son, and Holy Ghost simultaneously; each aspect arises only as the other ceases to be. This is not Bushnell's teaching. As Munger has expressed it: "Sabellianism asserts a trinity of manifestations, and denies that God exists eternally as a triad of persons. Bushnell assents

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1. Among the charges brought against him in the attempt to bring him to trial, was "his contemptuous denial of any Trinity beyond the blankest Sabellianism" - as quoted by Samuel M. Jackson in article on Bushnell in Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 1 - p.347 b. Even Dorner wrote in 1867: "Der geistreiche Congregationalist Bushnell lehrt Sabellianismus in theopaschitischer Form". (Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie - p.916)
 2. See Life and Letters - p.202.
 3. Bushnell Centenary - p.27.

to the first, but, as we have said, declines to make any assertion, positive or negative, in respect to the second."¹

Before passing adverse criticism on Bushnell's treatment of the Trinity, it may be as well to point out the things that may be commended in it. As usual with Bushnell, although his theory as a whole is not satisfactory, there are some very useful and suggestive things in it. He made much of the historic side of the Trinity. As Dougal MacFadyen has said, his insistence on the idea "that the Christian 'Trinity' is a result of the fact that the revelation of God to man is by historic process"² is a permanent contribution to the subject. This is a note which has not been sounded in the way that it should be in Christian theology. The real problem for the Christian theologian is not to find a trinity but to find a place for Jesus Christ in it so that it will really be a Christian Trinity. Bushnell's emphasis on the Christian Trinity as a revelation by historic process helped to stress this side of a great truth.

Again, Bushnell did for the Trinity what he did for most subjects he wrote on - he helped to bring it into closer relation with experience. The following quotation, although it cannot be regarded as fair to Bushnell's thought as a whole, is a useful one because of its emphasis on this

1. Horace Bushnell - p.126.

2. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics - Vol. 3, p.45.

feature: "Dr. Bushnell's particular interpretation of the Trinity, and his modification of view regarding it, are however, relatively unimportant. The great fact is that he sought to take the doctrine out of the realm of intellectual speculation into that of Christian experience and to find its essence in the truth 'that God is practically related to his creatures'".¹

Bushnell also did a good service to theological thought by protesting against over-dogmatic thinking on the subject of the Trinity. Protests against tritheistic conceptions had long been directed against the orthodox churches in New England but Bushnell was one of the first to make the protest from within the Church and it was all the more effective for that reason. It may be noted that all these contributions of Bushnell to the subject of the Trinity are ones that can be accepted by orthodox theology; while they have not always been stressed as they should have been, they are not ones that orthodox theology denies.

Bushnell was a man of his own age and his environment bestowed on him mixed blessings. His reaction to the situation, in which he found himself, has meant that later generations estimating him from the larger view point have found much to criticize in his teaching.

The most important criticism is that he did not go far enough in his thinking on the trinity. It is true

1. Bushnell Centenary - p.30.

that he was moving further and further from his early semi-Sabellianism and closer and closer to the Nicene creed. In this respect, he is a good example of the fact that most theologians who have been critical of the ontological theory have gradually struggled in their own way to a theory not so far removed from that of Niceae. But even at the end, it must be admitted that Bushnell did not hold an ontological trinity. There are, indeed, passages in which he comes close to it but taken as a whole his position is still a certain distance removed. After all has been said, the impression remains that he thought of the Christian Trinity more as a "new machinery of thought" than as something having a basis in the very centre of God's Being.

There is also a sense in which he obscured the truth of the Trinity. Foster has made the claim that Bushnell "was so impressed with the danger of tritheism that he could not do the Scripture representations as to the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit justice, nor appreciate the great current of church expression on this theme in creed, psalm, and system".¹ This criticism, however, must not be pressed too closely.

In conclusion, another quotation may be made from Foster in which he points out a rather curious fact - viz., that Bushnell's treatment of the trinity is an illustration of how he sometimes got away from his theory of language:

1. A History of the New England Theology - pp.410-1.

"It is strange that Bushnell, with his doctrine of expression through paradox, did not value more highly these individualizing, anthropomorphic forms of speech. Why should not he, of all men, have said what Professor Park, in the large-minded comprehensiveness of his truly catholic intellect, said, that 'one might either lay the emphasis in the trinity upon the unity of God, and find the mystery in the threeness, or lay it on the three-ness and find the mystery in the oneness'? In truth, Bushnell was at this point a substantial rationalist".¹

1. Ibid. - p.411.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST STAGE - EARLY TEACHING ON THE WORK OF CHRIST

(a) Justification for a chapter on this subject

There has been a tendency among students of Bushnell - G. F. Fisher is an exception - to neglect Bushnell's early teaching on the work of Christ in the consideration of his theology. This early teaching is found in 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology' and in certain sermons and letters written a few years after the publication of these books. T. T. Munger, in his chapter on 'God in Christ', dismisses the discourse on the atonement with the remark that it "was afterward expanded into 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' which will be considered farther on".¹ And when Munger does discuss this later work, he gives the impression that the writing of it was the first occasion on which Bushnell had attempted to treat the subject of the work of Christ.²

Bushnell, himself, has done something to encourage this neglect. In his introduction to 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', he speaks somewhat slightly of his former work as containing "a certain immaturity and partiality of conception."³ He even admits that he has not taken the trouble to inquire as to whether his present volume (i.e. the one of 1866) agrees

1. Horace Bushnell - p.131.

2. Ibid. - p.239.

3. See 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' - p.xxxvi.

with the former, but he claims that he is not aware of any disagreement between the two. This attitude is typical of Bushnell: the practical value of truth for the present moment meant more to him than the method by which that truth was obtained. All through his life he published his results whenever he had anything to say, without caring too much about their consistency. That Bushnell, in his later years, did not disparage his early teaching will be seen in a quotation below.

It must be admitted that Bushnell's early teaching on the work of Christ is not to be compared to his later treatises on the subject. To the person who is looking for a classic expression of a definite theory, 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is the book of Bushnell's to be recommended. But even when this is granted, there are reasons why some consideration of his early thought is necessary.

In our attempt to understand Bushnell's thought on the work of Christ, it will not do to neglect any relevant material. It is not too much to expect that some parts of his teaching may be outlined more clearly and simply in his earliest works. Sometimes, a writer's first thoughts on a subject are the most distinctive even though they are a little immature. In this exposition of Bushnell's thought, those ideas, which are substantially reproduced in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', will be treated in

a general way only. Therefore, there need be no fear of repetition.

It is also necessary to outline his early teaching in order to trace the development of his thought. Three distinct stages in his thinking on the atonement may be noted: first, that of 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology'; second, that of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'; and third, that of 'Forgiveness and law'. The difference between the first and the second may be regarded as that between an immature and a mature statement of the same view; yet there is a development between the two just as surely as there is between the second and the third. The tendency of Bushnell to become more orthodox in his later years is seen better in the light of his early books. They display his youthful radicalness to best advantage.

That Bushnell, himself, preferred to have the development of his thought shown, is evident from the fact that in 1875, when arranging for a new edition of his works, he expressed the wish to have his books arranged in chronological order. Regarding the first two, he said:

"I am going to want my two volumes, 'God in Christ', and 'Christ in Theology' in the first place, just because, though green, they give my points of departure for all that comes after. I have been looking them over, and find them to contain a great deal of my best matter, as well as that which is the reason of all that comes after."¹

There is still another reason. It will be well to keep in mind the teaching on the atonement current in

1. Life and Letters - p.553.

Bushnell's time. A review of the general theology of the period has already been given but a more detailed reference to the theories of the atonement is needed at this stage. The most suitable place to do this is in connection with his own early teaching. In these first volumes, he reviewed the New England theories and as he wrote he had them in mind. Dissatisfaction with them led him to formulate his own particular theory. They form the background against which his own views, and especially his early views, must be placed in order to be rightly understood.

(b) His introduction to the subject

The subject of the atonement was one which had a natural appeal to Bushnell. Always taking delight in the exploration of new regions of truth, this field was one that suited him, for it had already produced a variety of theories. Then, too, he was prepared to make much of experience in relation to theological problems, and the work of Christ is pre-eminently a subject to be treated on the basis of experience. He must have approached this field with a sense of relief, for the Church has never dogmatized on the subject of the Atonement as it has on the Incarnation and the Trinity.

As may be inferred from the above paragraph, Bushnell had a life-long interest in the subject. It is likely that it was first opened up to him in his college

years. In his introduction to his address at Harvard, he states that he had

"just emerged from a state of protracted suspense, or mental conflict, in reference to what is called theologically, the doctrine of Atonement The subject had for many years been hung up before me, and I had been perusing it on all sides, trying it by manifold experiments, and refusing to decide by the will what could only be cleared by light, till now, at last, the question had seemed to open itself and display its reasons."¹

As his books show, the interest which had reached a crisis at this period continued to the end of his life.

Bushnell had received fresh light on the subject of Christology, and this naturally led him to the other subject, for a new conception of the person of Christ necessarily involves a new conception of the work of Christ. But even before that, his teaching on 'Christian Nurture' was enough in itself to demand a revision of the current New England theories of the Atonement. The new (i.e. new to New England) thought of children in Christian homes, growing up to be Christians "through the moral and spiritual atmosphere environing them, as flowers grow in a well-tended garden",² called for a new interpretation of what the Incarnation, sufferings and death of Christ did for their salvation. In a sense, Bushnell's views on Christ and the Atonement were the result of carrying to a logical conclusion views expressed in his 'Christian Nurture.'

Bushnell approached the subject of the work of

1. God in Christ - p.185.

2. Dole - New World - Vol. 8, p.705.

Christ in the same spirit of humility as he did the person of Christ. He felt that it was a theme too large and too transcendent to be illustrated by any one analogy or expressed in any one formula. "How does our poor human understanding labor and reel before this great mystery of godliness. God's loftiest work, in fact, that in which he most transcends our human conceptions, is the work in which he is engaged to save us."¹ Or as he puts it later in a sermon: "when we undertake to shape theologically the glorious mystery of salvation by Christ, we just as much reduce it, or whittle it down, as human thought is narrower and tinier than the grand-subject-matter attempted."²

(c) His review of the New England theories

In his discourse in 1848, Bushnell led up to his own views by a critical review of the current teaching on the atonement. He divides the commonly accepted "orthodox teachers into two classes: one who consider the death of Christ as availing, by force of what it is; the other, by force of what it expresses."³

The former represents the penal satisfaction theory as held in New England. Never free from offensive

1. God in Christ - p.274.

2. Christ and His Salvation - p.12.

3. God in Christ - p.195.

features, it had suffered from re-statement after re-statement until it contained many artificial and erroneous elements. During the series of logical refinements, commercial ideas had become connected with it in such a way as to give it a hard, abstract, theoretical aspect. And it was especially offensive in its view of Christ's death as supplying enough suffering to balance the penalties remitted.

Bushnell finds it easy to criticize.¹ Among other arguments, he uses the following: its lack of real economy; its "double ignominy, first of letting the guilty go, and secondly of accepting the sufferings of innocence"; its inconsistency with the idea of future punishment; and its immoral method of setting the "transgressor right before the law, when as yet there is nothing right in his character".

The second theory in question is that advanced by the younger Edwards and by Dwight. Under their leadership, the penal satisfaction theory had been modified by the introduction of the governmental theory. The death of Christ was regarded as a substitute for penalty. The general justice of God was said to be upheld by this expression of God's hatred of sin. Christ only suffered sufficient pain to express the same amount of God's abhorrence as would have been expressed if He had punished

1. See 'God in Christ' - pp.195-8.

the world. The government of God having been sustained, He is able to forgive sin.

Bushnell is more favourable to this theory because he, too, thinks of Christ's death as an expression; but he also finds much in it to criticize. He is quick to see that the main criticism of the older view applies here as well. He is against any view which holds that Christ suffered punishment - no matter how small - from God. "No governmental reasons, I answer, can justify even the admission of innocence into a participation of frowns and penal distributions".¹ Bushnell's point is that while the governmental theory has grasped the essential truth that there is an abhorrence to sin in God to be expressed, it has failed to explain how this can be done according to the moral and aesthetic laws by which thought and feeling are conveyed from mind to mind. This is the point at which he, himself, faces the problem. His task may be said to be that of transferring a doctrine out of legal and physical phraseology into ethical and spiritual terms.

(d) His subjective-objective theory

Bushnell's early theory of the atonement has often been classified as "subjective", but he, himself, preferred to call it a "subjective-objective" theory.

As the terms "subjective" and "objective" occur many

1. God in Christ - p.199.

times in Bushnell's writings, it is necessary to have some idea of the meaning he attaches to them. This is all the more necessary in view of his use of the hyphenated combination of the terms to describe a single theory. His use of these terms will be understood best by a summary of his classification of the different theories of the atonement.

"Neglecting subordinate and less important distinctions", he lists the principal theories of the work of Christ under four heads:¹ first, "that which regards it as having effect on God, to procure release or pardon"; this he calls the objective view; second, "that which regards it as having this effect on God, and so, by the obligation of endearment thus produced, an effect on human character"; this he calls the objective-subjective theory; third, "that which regards it as wholly operative on man"; this is the subjective view of which he considers Coleridge² a good example; and fourth, "that which regards it as operative wholly on man, but in order to do this with

1. See 'Christ in Theology' - p.225.

Note: Bushnell's argument as outlined in this section is taken from both 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology' although the thread of the argument is from the former. The latter book is mainly a re-statement in which he relates his own views to historical theology - hence the title. It cannot be considered a development to any appreciable extent as far as his views on the atonement are concerned.

2. Bushnell's interpretation of Coleridge's theory may be questioned. Compare Fisher: "It is a mistake to attribute to Coleridge the opinion that the work of Christ consists in its power to affect the minds of men". (History of Christian Doctrine - p.449)

greater efficiency, as representatively operative on God"; this is his own theory which he wishes to be called the subjective-objective theory. In expounding this last view, he implicitly criticizes the other three.

Bushnell begins with a text - the same one as he uses in his discourse on the divinity of Christ - 1 John 1:2: "For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us". The one other verse which he thinks sums up his teaching is the one which gives the title to his book: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". As this indicates, Bushnell was prepared to find the atonement more in the incarnation than in the death of Christ. This is one feature of his theology in which seed thoughts derived from Coleridge are in harmony with his natural tendency to Eastern forms of thought.

He begins from what he considers to be an essential truth of the old governmental theory, viz., "that the value of Christ's life and death is measured by what is therein expressed".¹ The suffering of Christ is not a punishment suffered by him to placate an angry God but is simply an expression of God's abhorrence of sin. The result of this expression is an impression on men - rather

1. God in Christ - p.198.

than on God or the peoples of some other realm such as "Orion or the Milky Way". There is, indeed, an effect on God but it is only secondary: "the first, or immediate effect, is wrought in men as subjects, and then mediate, through that, God is able to hold a different governmental attitude to sinners, to forgive or justify".¹

The evil that Christ endures while giving an expression of God's nature is not the direct purpose of the incarnation. Evil endured simply and only for what it expresses, expresses nothing. The evil must be encountered as a necessary incident on the way to the fulfilment of the real purpose of the incarnation. To quote an important sentence:

"So if Christ comes into the world to teach, to cheer, to heal, to pour his sympathies into the bosom of all human sorrow, to assert the integrity of truth, and rebuke the wickedness of sin, in a word, to manifest the Eternal Life and bring it into a quickening union with the souls of our race, then to suffer incidentally, to die an ignominious and cruel death rather than depart from his heavenly errand, is to make an expression of the Heart of God, which every human soul must feel".²

Even considering Christ as a perfect character, it must be admitted, argues Bushnell, that his entry into human life changes it completely. But Christ is not only a perfect character but the Eternal Life - God expressed in and through the human. By his organization of "a new society or kingdom, called the kingdom of heaven, or sometimes the church", he breaks the "organic force of social

1. Christ in Theology - p.228.

2. God in Christ - p.202.

evil".¹

There is also a movement towards the individual person. Man has been living in sin in a condition of moral and spiritual darkness. But when the Word is made flesh the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is given. Man's consciousness of himself as a sinner is aroused and he wishes to break away from sin and to draw near to God; yet he is unable to do so and the self-accusing spirit of sin drives him almost to despair.

It is at this point that justification is needed. The guilty mind needs the confidence which is only possible through knowledge that one's sins have been forgiven. This justification is assured to us in Christ "when, forsaking all things for him, we embrace him as our life".² In Jesus, and especially in his suffering life and death, we see displayed the "unconquerable love of God's heart".³

What becomes of the law and justice of God? If God is to forgive sin and not exact the just penalties, there is a danger that forgiveness as well as the government of God will be cheapened in the eyes of mankind. It is not Christian to declare that God is so good and fatherly that He forgives freely without any conditions. In order to guard against the possible dangers of such a for-

1. Ibid. - p.209.

2. God in Christ - p.215.

3. Ibid. - p.216.

giveness, the authority of God's law has to be dignified and exalted. "Some expression of God requires to be made, that will as effectually impress our mind with a sense of fear and ill-desert in transgression, as the execution of the penalty would do under a system of pure justice".¹ In other words, the grounds of justification must be prepared.

Bushnell is convinced that Christ does demonstrate the essential and eternal sacredness of God's law at the same time as he is making possible the forgiveness of men. He gives four methods ² by which Christ brings the law closer to the souls of men: (1) by his teaching - the law as set forth by Christ is much more severe and searching than it is in the Old Testament teaching; (2) by his obedience - the grand scale of his obedience provides a wonderful expression of his love of the right and of his homage to law; (3) by his expense and painstaking - the knowledge of what God will do to maintain His law convinces us of its sacredness; (4) by the offering of his life as a sacred contribution - the death of a life so sacred, while not a sacrifice in any literal sense, is more awful to the guilty conscience than the thunders of Sinai. Bushnell admits that preparation was made for these last three methods by the use of their prototypes in the Old Testament sacrifices.

1. Christ in Theology - p.280.

2. See God in Christ - pp.218-38.

But Christ does more than this for law. "Law, taken by itself, can establish nothing";¹ and so comes in the double administration of law and grace. They are both essential parts of one work. To quote a vivid illustration, which is probably reminiscent of his ocean voyage:

"The waves of justice meet the waves of mercy, controverting and qualifying each other; mercy tempering the flow of justice and interspersing its distributions with the softer gifts of favor and compassion; justice applying its rugged fomentations and shooting its pains into the complacent bosom of prosperous and confident sin."²

Jesus, himself, by taking the attitude of submission to evil, vanquishes it, since evil is least of all able to endure the meekness of love. Broken by the cross, we accept as love what we had rejected as law, and so we accept all law. The letter that killeth is gone but the spirit that giveth life is come.

In reconciling mankind to God, Christ becomes the power of righteousness in men. To quote a suggestive phrase which he uses in the introductory part of his book, the gospel has a "tonic energy".³ The true purpose of the incarnation is the restoration of the union between God and man. Bushnell makes much of the idea that the life of the Christian is perpetually in Christ. Christ-

1. Ibid. - p.238.

2. Christ in Theology - p.279.

3. God in Christ - p.99.

ianity aims at destroying the life of self so that man may be elevated "into a life of perpetual inspiration, whose impulse and perfection are the pure inbreathing of God."¹ Or as he puts it in a sermon, preached in 1854, "the occupying power of Christ" is "the power Christ has to occupy, fill up, enlist, inspire, and lead on the soul".²

At this point, Bushnell leaves the "subjective" part of his view of Christ's work. Although claiming that he has a degree of confidence that it is true, he admits that it is not satisfactory to him and that he "could not offer it as the full and complete gospel of Christ".³ The reason why the subjective theory, taken by itself, stands condemned, is that it fails to do justice to a large class of Scripture terms such as "the atonement received by Christ, his sacrifice, his offering, his bearing the sins of many, the holiest opened by his blood, the curse he became, the wrath he suffered, the righteousness he provided".⁴ As he points out in 'Christ in Theology', where he takes terms such as 'propitiation' as illustrations, the truth of these terms is subjective, but the fact remains that they have been given to us in objective form.⁵ There is also the fact that the great majority of Christians of all centuries

1. Ibid. - p.244.

2. The Spirit in Man - p.259.

3.and 4. God in Christ - p.245.

5. Christ in Theology - pp.241-8.

have drawn their strength from a religion which gave these terms a central place. Bushnell feels that they could not have been wholly mistaken and he is convinced that these terms contain some of the most profound gospel truths.

He begins his explanation of the "objective" part of his theory with the statement that we naturally tend to put subjective truth into objective form. We say 'it is cold' instead of 'I am cold', 'it was delightful' instead of 'the delight was in me', and we use many phrases such as 'it appears to me'. Man finds this form of thought more useful and none the less true. Even a study of man's religious needs leads to the same conclusion. It would be impossible for a truly religious man to think of Christ's life and death in the artificial way of the purely subjective theory, for it would not meet his deepest need. To quote another illustration:

"Just as the sick man wants, not an apothecary, but a physician; not a store of drugs out of which he may choose and apply for himself, but to commit himself, in trust, to one who shall administer for him, and watch the working of his cure: so the soul that is under sin wants to deposit her being in an objective mercy, to let go self-amendment, to believe, and in her faith to live."¹

Another illustration that is used in most of his books on this subject is the use of the familiar phrase 'prevailing in prayer'.² In prayer, God is not made any

1. God in Christ - p.250.

2. See Christ in Theology - pp.249-51.

wiser, any more gracious, and he is not changed in any other way. This does not mean that prayer is simply a self-magnetizing process, for prayer is a real cause among causes. The change is in the suppliant who is brought into such a changed state that God is able to fulfil his requests. He does not realize that it is only a subjective change and he continues to speak of it in objective terms. Indeed, the likelihood of his continuing to pray will depend on his thinking of it in this way.

In the same way, says Bushnell, we must transfer the subject truth regarding the work of Christ into objective terms. That work produces a change in men, but because that change brings men into a new relation to God we speak of Christ as propitiating God. The following quotation gives the gist of his argument at this point:

"The moral propriety, then, or possibility, nay, in one view, the ground of justification, is subjectively prepared in us: viz., in a state or impression, a sense of the sacredness of law, produced in us, by Christ's life and death. But we cannot think of it in this artificial way; most persons could make nothing of it. We must transfer this subjective state or impression, this ground of justification, and produce it outwardly, if possible, in some objective form; as if it had some effect on the law or on God".¹

Bushnell points out that in changing his theory from its subjective to its objective form it passes into -----
 1. God in Christ - p.254.

the "view commonly designated by the phrase vicarious atonement".¹ He claims that at the root of his theory is identical with the common Protestant doctrine although not in any rigid sense. The subjective and the objective views are not logically equivalent but they are both true nevertheless.

Far from regarding the objective explanation as an invention of man, Bushnell looks upon it as having been instituted by God. From the first, God has been using the objective view to reveal the truth contained in the subjective. The "altar" terms may be regarded as "the Eternal and True Form of the doctrine of Christ, and therefore must neither be explained away, nor resolved into any speculative formula, that shall be virtually substituted for them".² The subjective-objective theory presents the only possible method of explanation and use of these terms. Christianity set forth in a purely subjective doctrine would be only another philosophy of self-culture - as it is with the Unitarians: it would not be a religion.

This does not mean that reflection is condemned completely. It has its proper use in religion in bringing men to a sense of their sin. Still, it is superseded in true religion. "No man is in the Christian state till he

1. Ibid. - p.257.

2. Christ in Theology - p.266.

gets by, and, in one sense, beyond reflective action".¹
 In answer to the question, 'How is the subjective-objective doctrine to be preached?', Bushnell concludes the chapter by touching on some of the points which he later developed into his famous last chapter of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. Both views are to be preached although the subjective one may be used more "among a cultivated, philosophic people, and in a philosophic age of the world".²

(e) Material from his correspondence with Dr. Hawes

Further material that may be included in Bushnell's early teaching on the work of Christ is contained in a letter to Dr. Hawes in 1854. Since this material is published only in the volume of his 'Life and Letters', long out of print, it is here quoted rather fully. At the time, many of Bushnell's Unitarian friends regarded it as a recantation, but this opinion can hardly be justified. The correspondence, however, is important in that it helps to show the development of his thought and also his desire to prove his nearness to the generally accepted church doctrine.

In the letter which was published as the basis of the agreement between Dr. Hawes and himself, he says:

"I could offer you here my acceptance of the 25th answer of the Shorter Catechism, regarding the

1. God in Christ - p.263.

2. Ibid. - p.271.

office-work of 'Christ as a priest,' in precisely the sense given it by Dr. Jonathan Edwards the younger, in his second sermon on the Atonement. I could also accept the 33rd Answer on the subject of 'Justification by faith,' without any such peremptory denial of the 'imputed righteousness' as is common with the ministry of New England, and certainly without any qualification that will not leave it standing as a most practical Christian truth. I see not, therefore, how you can think it necessary to my safety that I should be more literally squared by the Catechism than Dr. Edwards, or more truly in it than the living ministers of New England by still another degree.

But that I may leave you still less room, if possible, for concern, I will go farther, giving you as a volunteer expression of my faith on this head: That the work of Christ, viewed in its relation to the law of God, is that by which the forgiveness of sins is made compatible with its integrity and authority; that Christ, to this end, is made under the law - made sin knowing no sin Himself, receiving the chastisement of our peace, suffering and dying as a sacrifice for the sins of the world - in all which He is set forth as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God in the remission of sins; whereby the law broken is as effectually sanctified and sustained in the view of his subjects, and His justice as fully displayed as they would be by the infliction of the penalty; so that, on the ground of the sacrifice made by Christ and received by faith, we are justified and accepted before God."¹

(f) Criticism of his early teaching

A detailed criticism of Bushnell's treatise, 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' will be given in a later chapter. As that book is regarded as a development of his earlier views, and as it covers the most important points of his early theory, no extensive criticism of the latter will be attempted here. A few points, however, may be referred to - some because they are only relevant here, and others

1. Life and Letters - pp.336-7.

by way of introduction to the later chapter.

In the first place, it may be said that his exposition of the theory is somewhat immature. What Charles Hodge said of 'God in Christ' on its publication was proved to be true by later events: "He has not thought himself through. He is only half out of the shell. And therefore his attempt to soar is premature."¹ Before many years, Bushnell himself admitted this to be true.

The fundamental weakness of all his books on the atonement is most apparent in his early teaching. He is vague and unsatisfying on the question of the purpose and meaning of Christ's death. His use of the phrases "to suffer incidentally, to die an ignominious and cruel death rather than depart from his heavenly errand"² gives the impression that he takes too limited a view of the place of the death of Christ in that errand. Even though Christ knew that He was not dying merely for ostentation, surely He thought of His death as a very vital part of his work. At any rate, it was far from being an after thought or even an accident in the plan of God as Bushnell's theory has a tendency to suggest.

His early teaching also reveals his preference for treating the atonement from the manward side. At the root, the subjective side is the more important side

1. Princeton Review, Vol. 21, 1849, p.260.

2. God in Christ - p.202.

of his theory. The objective side is only brought in to buttress the subjective view. Although Bushnell did not intend it, this means that man occupies the centre of his thought in such a way as to leave no central place for God. As Denney has said of similar views, "God has no *raison d'être*, so to speak, but to look after us".¹ Any tendency to such a view of God detracts from a theory of the atonement.

The combination of subjective and objective elements fails to be convincing in Bushnell's theory. One wonders if a person who accepted the subjective part could really accept the objective part. Bushnell's illustration, in which he admits that a person who thinks of prayer as purely subjective will not continue long in prayer, seems applicable to his own theory. Another illustration that may be turned with devastating effect on his own theory is the one derived from the principle that when evil is endured simply and only for what it expresses, it expresses nothing. Anything done for expression only expresses nothing, as many writers criticizing Bushnell's later book have pointed out. Another unsatisfying feature is his suggestion that the theory, so far as the preaching of it is concerned, may be one thing for one class of people and another thing for another class.

1. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.236.

In conclusion, it may be said that his theory is not always consistent. It must not be forgotten that the address set forth in 'God in Christ' was delivered before a Unitarian audience. In preparing it, he had both his orthodox and his Unitarian friends in mind. His own admission, almost immediately after publication, that "being set between cross-fires to be raked on both sides, I was too anxious, perhaps, to meet every thought of everybody",¹ is significant. In 'Christ in Theology', he makes the plea that in his former discourse he had to stress the subjective side first in order to gain the interest of his Unitarian audience; and so, in the later volume, he tries the experiment of stating the objective view first. His success, however, is no better; the old dualism still remains.

1. Life and Letters - p.218.

CHAPTER VIII

SECOND STAGE - THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE

(a) Introductory

Bushnell had not yet reached his fiftieth year when his first two books on the atonement were published. All through his life he possessed an extraordinary ability to think and to re-think his intellectual problems. Once a subject really attracted him, it was never laid aside. It is not surprising, then, that he should soon have outgrown his early teaching on the work of Christ.

The experiences of those eventful years that followed his first address on the atonement had had such a broadening and deepening effect on Bushnell that he was able to approach the old subject as if it were an entirely new one. In 1859, he wrote to a friend: "Here is the great field left that I wait for grace and health to occupy".¹ Two years later, his letters show that his plans were being realized and that he was making a much wider and more original approach to the subject than he did in his first attempt.

This time he did not write and publish in haste. Ill-health, though not incapacitating him, compelled him to go easily. Perhaps too, he had learned the need of reflecting upon, and brooding over, his newly discovered

1. Life and Letters - p.422.

ideas. At any rate, in the introduction to his new book, he makes the statement that "the view here presented, was sketched, and, for the most part publicly taught, more than ten years ago". (p.xxxvi)¹ Another thing worth noting is that during the years while he pondered over this subject the Civil War in the United States of America was in progress. The fact that many men were giving their lives in sacrifice on behalf of their fellow citizens may have influenced him in the choice of a title for his great book.

His early teaching on the atonement may be termed the 'altar form' view. It is true that in his treatment of the subjective side of the theory he teaches the 'moral power' view; but the chief emphasis is on how the subjective truth is to be presented in objective form by means of the 'altar form' expressions. In 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', they occupy a minor place. The very title tells of a new approach to the subject. And it will be found that the main points of his earlier teaching do not occur in it till well on in the argument. It is a pleasant surprise to find so little repetition in the 1866 volume.

Bushnell's titles whether of sermons or of treatises always convey a good deal of his meaning. 'The Vicarious Sacrifice Grounded in Principles of Universal

1. The numbers in brackets following quotations in this chapter refer to the pages quoted from 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'.

Obligation' is no exception. He had come to think of the work of Christ as being from beginning to end a vicarious sacrifice based not on any superlative kind of goodness but on the common universal principles of right and duty. Part One contains a detailed definition of vicarious sacrifice.

(b) Vicarious sacrifice defined and illustrated

For his title, Bushnell had chosen words that had acquired penal associations through their use in traditional theology and so he had to be very careful in his use of these terms. "Any person acts in a way of 'vicarious sacrifice', not when he burns upon an altar in some other's place, but when he makes loss for him, even as he would make loss for himself, in the offering of a sacrifice for his sin". (p.5) When this is applied to Christ, it means that He in His vicarious sacrifice "engages, at the expense of great suffering and even of death itself, to bring us out of our sins themselves and so out of their penalties; being Himself profoundly identified with us in our fallen state, and burdened in feeling with our evils". (p.7)

The best explanation of vicarious sacrifice is found in the nature of love. Vicariousness is only another name for love. Sympathetic love does not consider the deserts of the subject upon which it is bestowed, nor the cost of the sacrifice that is involved, nor does

it look for an inducement, but by its very nature it identifies itself in sympathy with the subject concerned so as to bear his burdens and his sufferings from sin. Christ is sympathetic love incarnate. And all other good beings have this spirit of vicarious love in the degree in which they are Christlike. Given the universality of love, the universality of vicarious sacrifice is given also. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ only does what any and all love will do according to its degree. And for this reason, it is a truth that can be understood only as it is experienced in one's life.¹

Not only is love a principle of vicarious sacri-

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1. In a later chapter, Bushnell points out that the idea of "the substitutional action of love" is in Edwards' 'Miscellaneous Observations', and he quotes from it. (See 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' - pp.255-6) It is very doubtful, however, if this is the source of the idea as far as Bushnell is concerned. The way in which the reference to Edwards is introduced makes it seem likely that Bushnell only discovered the idea in Edwards after he had written the first part of his own book.

Another possible influence may be noted. In view of the fact that Bushnell had made such a thorough study of the 'Aids to Reflection', it is not improbable that he was influenced by Coleridge at this point. Compare the latter's illustration, in which the duties of James, a reprobate son, towards his mother are performed by another man, Matthew, whom Coleridge calls "the vicarious son". He goes on to say:

"If indeed, by the force of Matthew's example, by persuasion or by additional and more mysterious influences, or by an inward co-agency, compatible with the existence of a personal will, James should be led to repent; if through admiration and love of this great goodness gradually assimilating his mind to the mind of his benefactor, he should in his own person become a grateful and dutiful child - then doubtless the mother would be wholly satisfied!" (Aids to Reflection - pp.221-2 - Bohn's Popular Library edition, London 1913).

fice in Christ, but love in God the Eternal Father is also vicarious. God is love from all eternity even though the fullness of this love was not expressed till Christ came. Indeed, the very fact that this love had to be partly unexpressed for so long must have been a heavy point of sacrifice to God. The Old Testament gives a picture of God expressing Himself in burdened feeling over the sins of His people. "It is as if there were a cross unseen, standing on its undiscovered hill, far back in the ages, out of which were sounding always, just the same deep voice of suffering love and patience, that was heard by mortal ears from the sacred hill of Calvary". (p.31)

Christ, in His vicarious feeling and sacrifice, is a revelation in time of what God is in all eternity. As Bushnell puts it in a striking sentence, "there is a cross in God before the wood is seen upon Calvary; hid in God's own virtue itself, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now even in the throne of the worlds". (p.35) To the objection that God must be unhappy in such a state, he answers that Christ gave Himself in the same vicarious sacrifice, yet this earth never saw such a perfect example of a person "so deep in his peace and so essentially blessed". (p.16) If this be true of Him, it is surely true of His Father.

It is also true of the third person of the Trinity. Working in love, the Holy Spirit gives Himself in vicarious sacrifice for men and their sins "precisely as Christ did in His sacrifice". In His priestly work, He is "a Christ continued", "our other Comforter, our second Christ". Bushnell can even go so far as to say that "quite as much suffering, patience, and affliction of feeling, or even of what is called passion" is required in the Holy Spirit's work as Christ required to fulfil His ministry and bear His cross. (p.39)

Bushnell, seeking to prove a "commonness, or a common platform of principles in vicarious sacrifice" (p.54) suggests further that angels and all glorified minds are in exactly the same vicarious love although they are not doing and suffering the same things as Christ. "If they are in Christ's love, they will have a Gethsemane and a cross in that love, and will be fulfilling their unseen ministry in the same key with His." (p.55) Moses and Elijah giving Jesus their sympathy in the transfiguration scene are typical of the heavenly host. Among other illustrations, he uses that of the guardian angels caring with a tender sympathy for little children.

Bushnell concludes that the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is not something in which He is distinguished from His followers, but is rather His greatest point of

similarity to them. Sinful men are redeemed by Christ to a life of vicarious sacrifice. This life is for them not a life of asceticism, but a life of love leading to fellowship in the Master's sufferings. The suffering of the Master differs from that of His disciples only in degree. Of course, in man the sacrifice carries humbler effects. To quote a more conservative sentence of Bushnell's: "The difference will be so great, that He will have accomplished all that can be fitly included in the redemption of the world, while the same kind of sacrifice, morally speaking, in men, will accomplish only some very inferior and partial benefits." (p.68)

Not only does our sacrifice as Christians have this effect in the redemption of others, but it reciprocates the sacrifice of Christ for us. Suffering for His sake, our bearing of His burdens eases the weight of His load. Bushnell quotes a number of Scriptural passages to illustrate his theme that "Christ expects His followers to be with Him at the very point of His sacrifice" (p.75) and that "the whole economy itself of Christian virtue is based in the principle, and flavoured by the spirit of vicarious sacrifice". (p.76) He considers that there is every reason to believe that Paul made at least as heavy a sacrifice as Christ did from the physical point of view.

(c) The vicarious sacrifice applied to Christ

So far, Bushnell has been arguing for the univer-

salinity of vicarious sacrifice. Now, in Part Two, he turns the discussion more specifically to Christ and attempts to show that "The Life and sacrifice of Christ is what He does to become a renovating and saving power". (p.87) Here, as in Part One, he feels that he is dealing with simple themes that do not make either for debate or for abstrusiveness. In consequence, his style is so clear and fresh, so personal and homely, and his illustrations so concrete that the reader is entranced. It is not surprising that the suggestion has been made¹ that this section is a classic which should be published separately as Chapter Ten of 'Nature and the Supernatural' was published.

Bushnell begins with the epigrammatic statement that 'Christ (is) not here to die but dies because He is here.' (p.90) Although Jesus knew that He must suffer and die, this was not the object of His ministry. In this case, His life and death would have been merely a spectacle of suffering. Christ was not trying to lay up a store of goodness or superlative merit but was only acting in accordance with His character of love. Indeed, He made the 'fact-form sacrifice' in point of time only because He had been in vicarious sacrifice before He came into the world. The object of His ministry was in its effect on souls - "a regenerative, saving, truth-subjecting,

1. Buckham - Progressive Religious Thought in America - p.27

all-restoring, inward change of the life - in one word the establishing of the Kingdom of God, or of heaven, among men, and the gathering finally of a newborn world into it". (p.92)

Bushnell finds the key to Christ's work in His ministry illustrated in Matthew's rendering of the 53rd of Isaiah by the words "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses". He comments on the fact that theologians, while making much of the work of Christ according to the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, have neglected His office of Physician or Healer. To him, the latter is far more important. He considers it no accident that Christ devoted so much of His ministry to the healing of bodies, for, if He was true to His nature, He must show "a tender sympathy for their pains and a healing touch upon their diseases". (p.96) In a sentence that bares his own struggle towards health of body and soul, Bushnell remarks: "How nearly divine a thing is health, be it in the soul, or in the body". (p.97)

Just as Christ associated men's diseases with their sins, so there is a remarkable agreement between Christ's healing ministry and His life work as a whole. The one comprehensive, all-inclusive aim of His life was the healing of souls; his healing of bodies gave life and meaning to that spiritual work. As the bodies of men be-

came renewed in health, so their souls became renewed and regenerated in the spirit of Christ. The way in which Jesus took upon Himself the sicknesses of men illustrates how He bore the sins of men. He did not become blind with the blind or leprous with the lepers. He only assumed to bear their ills in a way of pains-taking labour and exhaustive sympathy that was yet very real and effective. This is even more apparent in His bearing of the sins of men. Sicknesses may be transferred so as to be borne literally. It is not so in the case of sins. They may, however, be borne by another when that other sympathetically identifies himself in feeling with the sinner and makes loss for him. This is what Christ does in bearing our sins.

Christ is God's power in the regeneration of sinful men. He is the manifestation of the greatness of God's character, and therefore of His moral power. Christ is such a power that He can "pierce, and press, and draw, and sway, and, as it were, new crystalize the soul" (p.126), so as to enrich the personality by the force of character, instead of demolishing it as would be the case if ordinary force were used. In being such a force, Christ is not just a mere example, even though the term be used in a sense wide enough to include the meaning that He is the revealer of God's love. He is

more than that, for He also possesses that which gives us the power to be like Him in character. Such a view of the essence of His work fits in with the fact that His coming to this earth was delayed, until mankind had been educated to the stage, where the force-principle of violence had given way to the force of moral character. If His purpose had been merely to satisfy divine justice, it could have been accomplished in the earliest stages of history.

There are two kinds of power - "attribute" and cumulative. As Franks has suggested, Bushnell is here making a contrast "between the power of the idea and the power of the Incarnation".¹ The former is the kind we attribute to God when we think of Him as the Absolute Being. It makes Him great, but also "thin and cold", for His attributes seem like "a kind of milky way" far above our heads. Cumulative power is the kind one does not always have, but which is won by "deeds and represented by facts". Such is the power of Christ: in the incarnation, "God is emptied of His perfections" (p.140); yet in Christ, it grew and grew until the time came when even His name possessed a remarkable power.

The chapter, in which Bushnell attempts to show how Christ becomes so great a character, is one of the most important in the book. Like Ritschl, Bushnell

1. A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ - p.404.

recognizes that no formula or summation of words can be expected to represent fully the meaning of the life work of Christ. Like Schleiermacher, who stressed the "total impression" made by Christ, Bushnell teaches that Christ's power consists in all that He said and did. "That work, accurately speaking, consisted in exactly the whole life of Jesus". (pp.165-6) Still, he considers it possible to throw some light on the features in Christ's life which help to reveal the source of His moral power.

Bushnell begins with the premise that Christ did not aim directly at the obtaining of such a power. He admits that Christ was not ignorant of what the result of His life would be, but he holds that this was not the motive for action. Using an illustration significant of the stirring times in which the book was written, he says: "As some great hero thinks of his country, when he takes the field to serve his country, so Christ thought of the world to be saved when He came to save the world". (p.146)

The life of Christ does not at first reveal the source of His wonderful power. His early life is far above the ordinary, yet it does not give Him the name that is above every name. In referring to Christ's consciousness of His call at the beginning of His ministry, Bushnell makes a statement that reveals a remarkable advance from his early teaching. Christ, he says,

"clearly perceives what He is to do, and what to

suffer; that He is to go down into the hell of the world's corporate evil, to be wounded and galled by the world's malice, and bear the burden of the world's undoing as a charge upon His love; and so, by agonies of sacrifice, including a most bitter death, to reconcile men to God and establish the eternal kingdom of God in their hearts". (pp.147-8)

Christ wins His battle against temptation at the very beginning of His ministry. Yet the power displayed then does not become known immediately, for even John the Baptist has doubts about Him. For three years His ministry goes on and, although He does many wonderful things, He does not yet gain His great power. His discourses astonish His hearers but they do not at once win Him any extraordinary power over them. Some things in His life are sublime and wise and so far impressive. He draws on human feeling by His tenderness, "His domestic, home-like feeling" with Martha and Mary, and "His intensely human sensibility" at the grave of Lazarus. But there are other times when He repels people by His manner. Sometimes, He appears grotesque to the people and, at other times, he baffles their expectations. In His agony and crucifixion, a "grand mystery of divine feeling" is set before the gaze of mortals. (p.156) But even His friends are not able to perceive it and, in the end, His death takes away all their confidence in Him.

Yet shortly after this, His wonderful power is felt; the clue to His life is His resurrection and ascension.

"Now, since He has gone up visibly into heaven, we begin to understand what He meant, when He said, that He came down from heaven". (pp.159-60) We see the super-human now where before we saw the merely human. Every incident falls into place and the whole process of His ministry is one of ever cumulative power. The vivid pictures that Acts gives of the effects of His power in the early Church testify to this. And His power is greater than ever to-day. Bushnell regards the 'kenosis' passage of Philippians 2:5-11 as the one passage of Scripture that sums up all this.

For a striking illustration of this cumulative power, Bushnell did not have far to seek - the effect of Abraham Lincoln's death upon his own countrymen. That this illustration has become a classic is, no doubt, partly due to Bushnell's timely use of it:

"I send these sheets to the press, when our great nation is dissolving, as it were, in its tears of mourning, for the great and true Father whom the assassins of law and liberty have sent on his way to the grave. What now do we see in him, but all that is wisest, and most faithful, and worthiest of his perilous magistracy. A halo rests upon his character, and we find no longer anything to blame, scarcely anything not to admire, in the measures and counsels of his gloriously upright, impartial, passionless, undiscourageable rule. But we did not always see him in that figure. the tragic close of his life added a new element, and brought on a second revision; setting him in a character only the more sublime, because it is original and quite unmatched in history". (p.161)

The power of Christ differs from any moral power

that has ever been gained by man in that it is "more difficult, deeper, and holier". "It is the power, in great part, of sorrow, suffering, sacrifice, death, a paradox of ignominy and grandeur not easily solved". (p.167) It throws light on the power of Christ to say that He humanizes God to us; "His perfections meet us in our own measures, not in the impossible measures of infinity". (p.172) Christ gains much of His power because His life awakens the sense of guilt and attracts the confidence of the guilty.

The moral power obtained by Christ culminates in the evidence of God's affliction for sin. In His compassions, sensibilities, sorrows, sacrifices, rejected sympathies, wrongs, and ignominies, Christ shows in His character the moral suffering of the divine love. Bushnell considers that the agony in Gethsemane is, in a sense, the key-note of Christ's ministry. It is pure moral suffering while that on the cross is both physical and moral. The importance of the physical sufferings lies more in what they express as the symbols of God's moral sufferings than in what they really are. "The moral tragedy of the garden is supplemented by the physical tragedy of the cross" in order that it may more easily be appreciated by "the coarse and sensuous mind of the world". (p.179) Yet, even on the cross, the suffering

of Christ is more ethical and spiritual than physical.

(d) The relation of the work of Christ to God's law and justice

So far, Bushnell has been considering the more positive and attractive side of his subject. In one sense, he feels that he has already given a complete view of the work of Christ, although he realizes that he has not yet touched on the part discussed in the current arguments on the theme. He, himself, foresaw that the first half of his book would be the less criticized, even though he did not anticipate that some theologians of succeeding generations would consider it to be one of the finest interpretations of the "moral view" of the atonement ever written.¹ It is not surprising that T. T. Munger, who favours the moral view pure and simple, admits that he "could almost wish the book had ended at this point".² Bushnell saw the advantages of such a procedure but he also saw the disadvantages of leaving his treatise in what he considered to be a half-finished state. And so, in Part Three, he discusses "the relations of God's law

1. See Denney - The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation -p.255
also Grensted - The Atonement in History
and in Life - p.25.

2. Horace Bushnell - p.249.

and justice to His saving work in Christ". (p.183)
 He was convinced that the moral view, already outlined, needed to be reinforced by truths from this field if it was to have the desired effect. "No moral-view account of His gospel, separated from this, can be anything but a feeble abortion". (p.339)
 In his earlier work, he had given some indication of his thought on this subject, but he now faced the problem from a much wider point of view.

In order to escape the danger of being dominated by "political analogies", Bushnell makes what seems to be a rather over-drawn distinction "between law before government, and law by government". The former, he defines as "the law before God's will, and before His instituting act; viz., that necessary, everlasting, ideal, law of Right, which, simply to think, is to be for ever obliged by it." (p.186) It happens that, in this state, multitudes fall beyond all power of self-redemption, and, as a result, the law itself is trampled in dishonour. Because of this breakdown, God institutes government to repair the broken sway of law, and, at the same time, He undertakes to redeem the fallen by a way in which they are freely forgiven.

The problem arising out of this is the objection

that the granting of a free forgiveness really damages the integrity of law and justice. Bushnell considers that this may be answered in two quite distinct and independent ways: (1) a discussion of the antagonism between justice and mercy; and (2) a discussion of the several kinds of damages supposed to follow when sins are forgiven without compensation.

Preparation has already been made for the chapter on justice and mercy by the separation of Eternal Law from the Being of God. Bushnell's conclusion, which is similar to the teaching of Ritschl on this subject, may be briefly stated: viz., that there is no real antagonism between justice and mercy for they are both necessary in God's plan of redemption. Working together, they magnify each other; salvation glorifies justice and justice vindicates mercy; and they both reach their highest stage when they are thus related. A very striking illustration, which Bushnell uses,¹ is that of the English preacher, who, when attacked by a highwayman, prays with him and moves him to accept employment with him so that in due time the man becomes transformed into a model Christian servant. The preacher has shown mercy and he

1. This illustration is also used in 'Forgiveness and Law' - p.45. There, however, the emphasis is on the cost of bringing about the change in his character.

is not less, but rather more, a righteous man because he did not insist on the rigid execution of justice in the sense of an exact doing upon wrong of its own ill desert. God's justice is of this kind - not a mockery in which it is implied that His justice is satisfied with injustice.

The second argument is longer and is, perhaps, on a lower plane, but Bushnell felt that it would likely be more effective in meeting the current criticisms. He makes a distinction between the ground of forgiveness and the working of forgiveness. Putting the emphasis on the latter, he holds that the former is no real subject at all, even though it has held a high place in traditional theology. Merely telling a man that he is forgiven signifies nothing if he is not forgiven. Forgiveness must be accompanied by a real change which is effected by the grace of Christ in His vicarious sacrifice. This leads to the question of how this forgiveness is to be related to the law precept, to the legal enforcements, and to God's rectoral justice. A separate chapter is given to each of these problems.

Instead of weakening it, Christ's vicarious sacrifice sanctifies the law precept by restoring it to such a place of honour that it is even "fulfilled in a higher key of observance". The forgiven person is restored to the precept of the law in such a way that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him without

legal enforcements. Christ resanctifies the law by restoring its original order in us. In His incarnation, He gains authority for the law by turning its cold precepts into a living reality. "There is really more of authority for the precept of law, in the fifth chapter of Matthew, than there is in the whole five books of Moses". (p.250) His life and death is the crowning proof of His own obedience to law as well as being a revelation of God's everlasting obedience to it.

Although legal enforcements have little bearing on upright minds, they are very necessary for bad minds. In showing that legal enforcements are not diminished by the doctrine of the free forgiveness of sins, Bushnell makes much of Christ's teaching concerning eternal punishment and the judgment of the world by Himself.¹ The doctrine of future punishment is a specifically Christian one emphasizing the fearfulness of the law as has never been done before. Bushnell's idea of future punishment is a qualitative one according to which the higher powers of the soul, but not the soul itself, are extinguished. The important thing to note is that he regards the general doctrine as an intrinsic element

1. As Grensted points out, this part exhibits "the curious phenomenon of a writer who holds to the retributive view of punishment and yet does not accept the Penal theory of Atonement" - A short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement - p.342.

of the gospel. "If there were no such future peril, and God were such a being that no fact of destruction were possible under Him, then there could, of course, be no salvation, or Saviour". (p.292) Again, Christ is the Judge of mankind just because He is the Saviour. The paradoxical phrase "the wrath of the Lamb" - the subject of one of Bushnell's most powerful theological sermons¹ - stands for a great truth. In the light of all this, Bushnell concludes that in Christianity, motives, far stronger than those of pre-Christian times, have been provided for the enforcement of law.

The question of how God's rectoral honour is effectively maintained is a question of how God can be just and yet command respect without executing justice or having His justice satisfied in some other way. The way in which Bushnell faces this problem is one of many examples that may be given of the way in which he interpretes the work of Christ in the light of the incarnation. Christ is incarnated into all the corporate liabilities of the race and has thus come under the curse and has borne it for us. His intense mental struggles at the time of His temptation and in the garden of Gethsemane give some indication of what it cost Him to be joined to all the corporate evils of mankind by His incarnation:

1. Christ and His Salvation - pp.314-332.

"He had never undertaken to bear God's punishments for us, but had come down simply as in love, to the great river of retributive causes where we were drowning, to pluck us out; and instead of asking the river to stop for Him, he bids it still flow on, descending directly into the elemental rage and tumult, to bring us away." (p.327)

Having all power to dispense with the instituted order of justice, Christ refuses to do so. He uses it to heal the diseases of men but He refuses to use it to rescue His own person. In this way, He pays such deliberate respect to God's rectoral honour as to cause it to be effectively maintained.

The moral power obtained by Christ in His vicarious sacrifice is dependent on faith. In the life and death of Christ, such new power is gained for faith that justification by faith may be spoken of as "the grand result of Christ's work, and the all-inclusive grace of His salvation". (p.342) This leads Bushnell to the central subject of reformation theology. Allowing only one chapter to this theme, he follows neither the traditional Protestant theory nor the traditional Roman Catholic one. He is nearer to Schleiermacher in arguing for a moral rather than a political or judicial interpretation of the term 'justification'.

It may be that the best clue to his meaning is his interpretation of Romans 3:25-6 which he paraphrases somewhat after this fashion: 'Whom God hath set forth to

be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to inwardly impress His righteousness, for the remission, by God's forbearance, of sins heretofore committed; to demonstrate, I say, for this present time, His righteousness, that He might stand full before us in the evident glory of His righteousness and the 'righteousness' of him that believeth in Jesus'. (See p.357) Christ is not a ground but a power of justification. Bushnell is against all interpretations of the idea of remission in which remission makes no change, and confers no benefit, and "is only a kind of formality" (p.360) - a phrase that R. W. Dale failed to read in its proper context.¹ As far as Bushnell is concerned, the idea of remission is very closely connected with the idea of regeneration. Christ is the righteousness of God in that He restores the normal relation between man and God and thus "permits the 'righteousness' of God to renew its everlasting flow". (p.368) Man trusts himself as a sinner to Christ the Saviour and thus through Christ's work confidence is restored to the guilty man so that he finds his righteousness in God and thus becomes a Christian.

(e) Sacrificial symbols and their uses

Bushnell's theory of the work of Christ does

1. See Dale's 'The Atonement' - p.338; also his 'Christian Doctrine' - p.254.

not stand or fall with this particular part of it, for this concluding section is only intended as an explanation of certain ceremonial terms which are closely connected with the cross in the Scripture. To neglect this explanation would be to leave the theory open to misunderstanding and unfair criticism. It may be observed that this part of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' bears a closer resemblance to Bushnell's earlier teaching than any other part. For this reason, it will be summarized as briefly as possible.

After a long review of the uses of sacrifices in the Old Testament times, Bushnell concludes that the purpose of sacrifice, taken as a liturgy, was lustral. It cleansed, and purified, and carried away pollution, and in that sense absolved the guilty. And because Christ's purpose was the cleansing of the guilty soul, He was set forth in the New Testament as a sacrifice. He fulfilled the analogy of the ancient sacrifice and the terms used in explaining His sacrifice must be understood in the light of that. They have their truth in the fact that "Christ is here in the world to be a power on character - to cleanse, to wash, to purify, to regenerate, new-create, make free, invest in the righteousness of God, the guilty souls of mankind". (p.412)

Three terms - atonement, expiation, and propitiation - have been left for separate treatment. The

greater part of a chapter is devoted to an attempt to prove that expiation is a classical, rather than a scriptural term which has very little real Christian colouring. It too often conveys the pagan idea of an evil offered to soften the anger of God. It has no legitimate use in the Christian atonement. Through its association with the term 'expiation', the true Christian word 'propitiation' has come to imply that God is placated by the expiatory pains offered to Him. But it is really an objective term used to express the subjective truth of atonement. As in Ritschl, the reconciliation is that of men to God and not that of God to men. "Atonement then is a change wrought in us, a change by which we are reconciled to God. Propitiation is an objective conception, by which that change, taking place in us, is spoken of as occurring representatively in God." (p.450)

In the last chapter of the book, Bushnell surprises the reader with the statement that what has already been concluded to be true regarding Christ's work is not the proper material for preaching. He bases his decision on the distinction between "what is true concerning a matter" and "the matter itself". Truth concerning Christ is not to be identified with Christ. It is only in the preaching of the latter that there is power.

He specifies three elements essential to true preaching. The first is the assertion of God's law and justice in such a way as to awaken the consciences of the guilty. The second is the exhibition of the Christian facts. He thinks "it would be hardly possible for a preacher of Christ to be too much in the facts of His life". (p.459) The third is the right conception and fit presentation of the gospel under the altar forms provided for it. These are God's own chosen forms - "the soul's great sacrifice, the Lamb that bears and takes away its sin, etc." (p.474) The church that uses them will prosper but the church that preaches its own "philosophy of Christ" will not have God's blessing. To many, Bushnell seems to be asserting in these pages on preaching all that he opposed in his long treatise.

"Christ is good, beautiful, wonderful, His disinterested love is a picture by itself, His forgiving patience melts into my feeling, His passion rends open my heart, but what is He for, and how shall He be made unto me the salvation I want? One word - He is my sacrifice - opens all to me and beholding Him, with all my sin upon Him, I count Him my offering, I come unto God by Him and enter into the Holiest by His blood." (p.461)

It is only by this objective method that we can escape self-consciousness in religion. "Any strictly subjective style of religion is vicious. It is moral self-culture, in fact, and not religion". (p.467) With these words, which seem to many to be the most severe criticism Bushnell could have made of his own theory of the work of Christ, the transition to the next chapter is natural.

CHAPTER IX

CRITICISM OF 'THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE'

A - favourable

(a) Review of points to be commended

The previous chapter has already brought into prominence many of the commendable features of Bushnell's great book on the atonement. Even with that material fresh in mind, it will be well to begin our criticism of it with a brief review of its outstanding merits. Besides providing a place for new material, it will also serve to give systematic form to points which have only been noted in a casual way.

In the first place, too much stress cannot be laid on the strong ethical and spiritual character of the book. As has been said, "Its pages testify not only of the author's genius, but of a mind so saturated with the spirit of Christ as to give the colour and aroma of that spirit to its every utterance."¹ Much has been said already about the ethically offensive elements in the theories of the atonement current in his day. Not only is his theory free from these damaging features but it has a positive moral appeal, and is presented in such a clear and simple way, with a wealth of beautiful and striking

1. Life and Letters - p.489. The chapter from which this quotation is taken was written by Edwin P. Parker.

illustration, that it appeals to a much wider class of readers than theories of the atonement usually do.

It is a theory of moral power, not just one of moral influence. It is worthy of note that Bushnell never uses the latter phrase although his theory has often been described as one of the "moral influence" theories. There is a big difference between the two and Bushnell insists on it. This may be inferred from the fact that one of his chief criticisms of Anselm is that the latter, although on the verge of the moral view, "puts forward only these two very thin, but painfully suggestive words, 'example' and 'imitation', and is by these exhausted"¹. He feels that the work of Christ is not merely something capable of persuading people to be good by example and influence, but something with such dynamic qualities that the power to produce a changed character is created in the person concerned.

While avoiding the offensive elements of the current theories, Bushnell does not go to the other extreme and present a "soft" emasculated conception of a God incapable of righteous anger. Although he criticizes the rectoral and penal theories, he uses more of their material than most of their critics usually do. Perhaps, as far as the New England rectoral theory is concerned, he was ignorant that it contained so many of his own staple ideas. Whatever

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p. xxviii.

their source, he introduces them into his moral power theory in such a way as to give it much additional strength. Like himself, his theory, avoiding all cheap suggestion, is naturally virile and "red-blooded", although it also contains many tender passages. It is the combination of these two that makes possible Grensted's fine tribute: "Bushnell's 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' with its legal exposition of Atonement and its interpretation of the whole in terms of love, is one of the greatest books upon the subject ever written".^{1.}

The first sentence in the above paragraph refers favourably to Bushnell's conception of God. This point deserves more consideration than it has usually received. A theory of the atonement, to be true, must be based on the Christian conception of God. It was on this very point that Bushnell was dissatisfied with the theories of his own day. His own theory, in which God is thought of as the 'Eternal Father', is true to the New Testament teaching of the Fatherhood of God. Here again it may be seen that Bushnell's views on the atonement were the result of his carrying to their logical conclusion truths impressed on him in childhood and expressed in his book 'Christian Nurture'. It was natural for him to interpret the work of Christ more through the analogies of family life than

1. The Atonement in History and in Life - p. 25.

through the analogies of the law courts.

Another outstanding feature of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is the emphasis on the vicarious element involved in the nature of sympathetic love. Bushnell brought men back to the truth that Christ was a loving person - a truth that was sadly lacking in his day. By bringing into relief the closeness and the necessity of the connection between love and sacrifice, he portrays the work of Christ as the natural and spontaneous outcome of His love, and he thus avoids those elements which make so many interpretations seem artificial. Exploring a subject on which very little had been written in his day, he draws his material from every sphere where a similar law of substitution prevails. Such a fresh and original treatment produced a classic. Munger once described Bushnell as a theologian of beginnings, basing his remark on the observation that Bushnell completed nothing because each of his great contentions required what could not be given in his own day.¹ The most notable exception to this is the early part of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. It is complete in itself. Speaking of it and McLeod Campbell's book, 'The Nature of the Atonement', Denney has said; "It may be questioned whether anything has been written since to rival either as an interpretation of -----

1. See the pamphlet 'Bushnell Centenary' - p.46.

Christ's reconciling work purely through the idea of love".^{1.}

Bushnell's thorough method of illustrating the universal character of vicarious love has had some important applications in the field of Christian conduct. The older theories tended to make the Christian's participation in the work of Christ merely passive. But now, the follower of Christ, filled with the spirit of love, was led to see that, in some measure at least, the work of Christ is imitable and that Christ expects it to be imitated.

Mention may be made at this point of how well Bushnell's theory fulfils requirements laid down by Denney in his book 'The Atonement and the Modern Mind'. Denney states that the demand for an ethical treatment of the atonement is usually expressed in two ways: (a) "There is the demand for analogies to it in human life;" and (b) "There is the demand that the Atonement shall be exhibited in vital relation to a new life in which sin is overcome".^{2.} That Denney's words summarize Bushnell's theory reveals how truly modern the latter is.

'The Vicarious Sacrifice' has influenced to some extent modern theological thought in favour of those theories which interpret the atonement in the light of the incarnation.^{3.} Not since Luther's time has so much been

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1. See the Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p. 255.
 2. The Atonement and the Modern Mind - p.40.
 3. Note: for an account of this idea in Luther see Gustaf Aulén's 'Christus Victor' - pp. 119 - 138.

made of the truth that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself". In Bushnell's thought, the problem of the atonement is closely related to that of the incarnation. This has two important results.

It helps him to view the work of Christ as something very closely related to the needs of man. His interest in the incarnation is religious rather than philosophical. While he probably would have agreed with Augustine that "there is much else in the Incarnation besides^{1.} the remission of sins", he insists on the close connection between the incarnation and the fact of sin. This intimate connection between the two is a necessity; otherwise, as Denney has remarked, we are apt to say: "After all, it was not for us He did it, and we are not so bound to Him or so dependent upon Him as some people would have us^{2.} believe".

It also helps Bushnell to view the work of Christ as centring in His life. This enables him to show the significance of many of the details of Christ's ministry which had hitherto been neglected. Thinking of the work of Christ as something that had to be morally achieved, he teaches that everything in His life contributed to it. This is to be commended, for it avoids the mistake which

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1. De Trin. 13:22. (Quoted by David Smith - The Atonement p. 8)
 2. Letters of Principal Denney to his Family and Friends - p.187.

theologians make when they give the impression that much of Christ's work was superfluous, (e.g.) when it is said that the babe at Bethlehem was enough to save mankind, or that one drop of His blood was a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the world. It is true, no doubt, as we shall see below, that Bushnell does this to the exclusion of much truth about the death of Christ. Perhaps, this one-sidedness was necessary in order to give the desired emphasis but, whatever we may conclude regarding the accompanying defects, credit must be given to Bushnell for this positive contribution.

Not only does he avoid the old over-emphasis on the death of Christ by his attention to the life of Christ, but he also throws the resurrection into relief. It is for him the key to much of Christ's work. This is a feature of Bushnell's thought which has not received the notice it deserves. As Denney has pointed out, this way of thinking provides a "means of keeping hold of the Person of Christ in His work"¹ - something that is being recognized more and more by theologians.

Bushnell's explanation of the atonement as related to man cannot be too highly praised. One-sided as the theory is, it is a masterpiece as far as it goes. The neglect of the God-ward side is almost repaid in the excellence of the man-ward side. The theory draws attention to the vital

1. The Atonement and the Modern Mind - p.111.

nexus between Christ's work and sinners. It interprets that work so vividly in the terms of human experience that its close relation to man is much more easily understood even by the ordinary person. H. R. Mackintosh has said: "It is surely the false step in many theories of atonement^{1.} that they first abstract the Christian from Christ". Certainly, Bushnell did not make this mistake, for, as F.H. Foster has said, "he emphasized as had never been done in theological history the direct work of Christ in saving men, his loving service by which he moves their souls toward holiness".^{2.}

These good qualities of Bushnell's theory are such that, whatever may be said in adverse criticism, their value is not impaired. This is quite possible in view of the fact that the positive teaching of the "moral" theory has never been denied by the supporters of other theories, and even writers, who are utterly opposed to Bushnell's theory as it stands, acknowledge that there is much to be commended in it. The following quotation from J. S. Lidgett is typical: "It may fairly be said that no work

1. The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ - p.332.
2. Article 'New England Theology' in the New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. Vlll, p.138.

on our subject contains a greater wealth of material, which must be used in building up a comprehensive account of the Atonement".^{1.}

In a general sense, it may be said that Bushnell's theory errs only by way of defect. The essential positive principles of his view are more and more winning approval - (e.g.) Denney has said that "all that is positive in the doctrines of Bushnell is to be welcomed without reserve".^{2.} Where criticism is made, it is either directed against his denial or omission of other sides of the great theme which are considered to be essential to any complete theory such as Bushnell attempted. Even he himself was willing to admit this in his later years. A friend, who spent a vacation with him in 1873, reports: "He spoke of the first edition of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' as erroneous in the sense of being but a partial vision, yet true enough as far as it went".^{3.}

1. The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement - p.190.
Cf. R.W. Dale: "We should greatly regret to give our readers a false impression of Dr. Bushnell's treatise. Nothing, that he writes, can be commonplace or worthless. In the development of his system, there are many paradoxes, but also many noble thoughts vividly expressed; and there is an intense glow of spiritual fervour on almost every page". (British Quarterly Review, Vol. XLIV, 1866 - pp. 429-30).
2. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.261.
3. Life and Letters - p. 533.

B - unfavourable

(a) His own lack of confidence in the theory.

Before attempting to criticize 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', it may be pointed out that Bushnell showed in his later years a diffidence towards the work as a whole, which has militated against it psychologically. We naturally feel that, if the author, who understood it best, was not satisfied, there is less likelihood that we shall consider it satisfactory. This argument has no real weight in a philosophical estimate of the truth of the theory, but it is a psychological factor likely to bias most estimates of the book.

Just how much of Bushnell's later dissatisfaction is expressed unconsciously in the last chapter of the book in question, it is difficult to say. Many writers have¹ regarded it as equivalent to an admission on Bushnell's part of the failure of his theory. James Orr has said:

"There is, perhaps, nothing more curious in literature than the way in which, in the closing chapter of his Vicarious Sacrifice, after exhausting all his powers to convince us that the efficacy of Christ's sufferings lies solely in their moral efficacy, Dr. Bushnell practically throws

1. See R.W.Dale - The Atonement - p.LII of the Preface to the Seventh Edition.
 A.A.Hodge - The Atonement - p.p. 297-8.
 Crawford - The Atonement - p.p. 376-9.

the whole theory he has been inculcating
to the winds as inadequate for the moral
and spiritual needs of men." 1.

Others have suggested that the introduction of the "altar
forms" at this stage of the argument seems hardly in
keeping with Bushnell's character. As one writer has
said, "It lends colour to the charge of borrowing the
language of a rejected theory to cover the leanness of
his own." 2.

These criticisms are, however, a little too severe.
Bushnell may surely be given credit for sincerity in his
belief that, in making the distinction between what is true
concerning the work of Christ and what should be preached
in connection with that work, he was not retracting the
main body of his book. In fairness, it may be asked
whether this distinction may be justly made, in view of the
fact that the evidence seems to be against Bushnell. The
weight of opinion is in favour of the position that a
doctrine of the atonement which cannot be preached is not
true. One of Ritschl's principles, although not written

1. The Christian View of God and the World - p.351

2. T.W.Tymms - The Christian Idea of Atonement - p.189

with Bushnell's chapter in mind, is very applicable here:

"We must not, however, admit into Dogmatics anything which cannot be employed in preaching and in the intercourse of Christians with one another." 1.

Bushnell's position carried to its logical conclusion would mean that every man would preach the altar forms in language much the same in outward form, but the inward meaning would depend on the preacher's theology. That would be absurd.

(b) No adequate explanation of the death of Christ

The most serious criticism of Bushnell's theory in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is that the explanation of the distinctive life work of Christ, especially as it is viewed in its relation to His death, is not adequate. Of course, Bushnell says that Christ's mission is the moral renovation of character in mankind by the appeal of love shown in his sufferings and death. But when he is pressed further for a cause of the sufferings and death of Christ, he is not so definite. He has criticized Anselm for being over-anxious to do justice to "the rational existence of the truth"² but his own theory is weakened by the opposite tendency.

1. The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation - The Positive Development of the Doctrine - p.606.
2. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.xxv..

Bushnell emphasizes in a new way the office of Christ as a Physician, but he does this to the exclusion of truth regarding Christ's priesthood - especially so in the relation of the latter to His death. It is not too much to say that Bushnell's theory gives no adequate reason for the death of Christ. In this connection, it has the weakness of all "subjective" theories which undertake to explain away the objective basis of the atonement. Robert Mackintosh describes them as "suicidal theories" and says "that the most vulnerable point in these latter is just this, that they are unable to indicate any necessity for Christ's dying".¹

Bushnell is right in so far as he shows that the demonstration of what God is, as revealed in Christ's life and death, is singularly suited to call forth man's penitence and faith. He fails, however, to observe that the necessity of Christ's death does not lie simply in the desire to call this forth, but lies rather in the nature of God Himself. The whole trouble is that without an adequate explanation of the necessity of Christ's sufferings and death - or rather when the impression is given that there is no adequate

1. Historic Theories of Atonement - p.16.

explanation - it is not a real revelation; there is no love of God displayed and no moral appeal can be made.

Many illustrations of this truth have been given¹ but none excels R. W. Dale's in conciseness and pointedness:

"If my brother made his way into a burning house to save my child from the flames, and were himself to perish in his heroic venture, his fate would be a wonderful proof of his affection for me and mine; but if there were no child in the house, and if I were told that he entered it and perished with no other object than to show his love for me, the explanation would be absolutely unintelligible. The statement that Christ died for no other purpose than to reveal His love to mankind, is to me equally unintelligible".²

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1. See: Denney - The Death of Christ - pp. 176-7.
 Orr - The Christian View of God and the World - p.349
 Robert Mackintosh - Historic Theories of Atonement pp.17-19.
 Dale - Christian Doctrine - pp.220-1.
 2. The Atonement - Preface to the Seventh Edition - p.liv.
 Note: This criticism of subjective theories has not been allowed to pass without objections being raised. Rashdall, in criticizing a very similar illustration of Denney, says: "It is not too much to say that Dr. Denney makes our Lord actually commit suicide". (The Idea of Atonement - p.440). It is difficult, however, to see how Denney's illustration (or Dale's) can be interpreted in this way. It may be that Rashdall means that the person who uses such an illustration implies that those who teach a purely subjective theory unconsciously hold that Christ committed suicide. Certainly, Bushnell did not intend to teach this - he thought of Christ's death as an incident in a very important life. Yet it may be said that his theory carried to its logical conclusion implies something akin to the above. A rather odd fact may be noted in connection with these illustrations of Dale and Denney: Bushnell, himself used almost a parallel illustration in his first book on the atonement. (See 'God in Christ' - pp.201-2). Had he forgotten it, or did he consider it inapplicable to 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'?

This general conclusion regarding his failure to do justice to the death of Christ is confirmed by a close examination of the specific passages on the subject. They are surprisingly few in number and are never central, but are introduced in order to buttress other positions. And yet, when the whole scheme of his theory is taken into consideration, this is only to be expected. Anxious to change the emphasis from the death of Christ to the death of Christ, he tends to go to the other extreme and make the life of Christ outweigh the death of Christ in His saving work. The whole tone of Bushnell's theory is just the opposite of Denney's principle that Christ's "life is part of His death".¹

Bushnell makes much of the obedience of Christ to law, but he fails to realize the full significance of the fact that this obedience includes obedience "unto death". In all this, he is untrue to the New Testament teaching that "Christ died for our sins" - a conviction that is at the heart of five out of six types of New Testament teaching. F. H. Foster considers that Bushnell's failure to combine his teaching on the necessity of maintaining the sanctity of law with "the Biblical statements as to the death of Christ" results from his lack of "sufficient and correct methods of exegesis".²

1. The Atonement and the Modern Mind - p.109.

2. A History of the New England Theology - p.418.

Bushnell's attitude to Christ's death is revealed in the way he emphasizes the moral sufferings of Christ with a corresponding lack of emphasis on the physical suffering and death of Christ. His explanation of how Christ bore our sins - "bore them on His feeling, became inserted into their bad lot by His sympathy as a friend"¹ - is excellent so far as it goes. No one questions that He bore them on his heart. The real point is that Christ also bore them in his body - a fact for which Bushnell does not make sufficient allowance. He has no adequate explanation of the well-known verse in 1 Peter 2:24 "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree". It almost seems as if the cross is for him the anti-climax; he even goes as far as to say: "The moral tragedy of the garden is supplemented by the physical tragedy of the Cross".² The following quotation from Dale may be admitted to be too extreme - Bushnell's theory does depend to a considerable extent on Christ's death and resurrection - but, by its very over-emphasis, it helps to drive home the truth of our criticism:

"The 'Moral View', however, as illustrated by Dr. Bushnell, would be complete if the four Gospels closed with the story of Gethsemane, and if our Lord had been miraculously delivered from the death, which was then threatening Him; or if Pilate's proposal had been accepted, and Jesus

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.11.

2. Ibid. - p.179.

of Nazareth had been released instead of Barabbas the robber."¹

All through his book, Bushnell gives the impression that he thinks of the death of Christ more as a revelation than as an atonement. 'It is more a work of art than an event upon which our salvation depends' is a slightly exaggerated statement of the impression given. It is not surprising that Grensted claims that "Bushnell comes to the remarkable result that the Death of Christ has nothing directly to do with the Atonement".² Now, while the death of Christ is indeed a revelation of God's love, as Bushnell stresses, this is not the whole truth nor even the most fundamental truth about it. Any theory which does not lay the chief emphasis on Christ's death as an atonement may be regarded as erring by defect.

Bushnell's principle "Christ not here to die, but dies because He is here"³ is another evidence of his tendency to do less than justice to this theme. Whatever theory of the atonement we may hold, one of the necessary assumptions seems to be that it was Christ's intention to die for men - in a far stronger sense than Bushnell admits. It would almost seem as though after writing the manuscript of the book, he became aware of this weakness, for in the table of contents the above quotation was changed so as to read: "Christ is not here

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1. British Quarterly Review (Vol. XLIV) - 1866 - p.431.
 2. The Doctrine of the Atonement - p.342.
 3. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.90.

simply to die, but dies because He is here". The introduction of this one word makes a big difference in the meaning.

The whole effect of Bushnell's theory is to place the atonement in heaven - in the heart of God - rather than upon Calvary. The merits of this particular view of the eternal atonement will be considered in the next chapter. Its full significance is better developed in 'Forgiveness and Law' and for that reason it will serve our purpose better to criticize it in the chapter dealing with that book. It is, however, mentioned here as another illustration of Bushnell's tendency to neglect the theme of Christ's death. In his anxiety to enrich the idea of vicarious sacrifice as something universal and eternal, he fails to do justice to what he himself once described as "that particular work in time which we call the vicarious sacrifice of Christ".¹

(c) The theory makes the work of Christ too commonplace

A second general criticism of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is that there is a tendency to make the work of Christ too commonplace. Like Ritschl, Bushnell in his effort to bring Christ and His work close to man, neglects to do justice to the uniqueness and solitariness

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.252.

of the work of Christ. He brings into prominence one side of the paradoxical truth at the expense of the other. Perhaps, this was a natural and even necessary emphasis if the modification of the aloofness of some of the older theories was to be achieved. But it is one that must be criticized when the theory is judged along with other theories.

A few of the ways in which his treatise tends to make Christ's work commonplace may be noted. He thinks of the work of Christ as imitable and so far this is good. But he fails to stress the corresponding truth that Christ's work is inimitable in many respects. While finding many excellent analogies to Christ's work in human experience, he fails to make clear that the work of Christ always transcends in some way the experience of men. The love of man helps to throw light on the love of Christ but it cannot be compared to the love which passeth all understanding. As Christ bore (and bears) the burdens of His fellow beings, so also it is true that Christians must bear one another's burdens and sins - although not in such a way as to make themselves miniature Christs. But Christ bore the sins of mankind in another sense - the one which makes Him the one Mediator between God and man - one in which it is impossible for man to bear his own sins, let alone those of other men.

Again, Bushnell speaks of Christ suffering just because of His presence among sinful men - a truth so far as it goes. But he allows it to take the place of the still greater truth that there is a real sense in which God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all". Instead of emphasizing the truth that Christ suffered for us, he is inclined to suggest that Christ suffered with us. Commenting on the words of Paul that "Christ is made a curse for us", he says: "the meaning is exhausted, when He is conceived to simply come into the corporate state of evil, and bear it with us - faithful unto death for our recovery".¹ This use of the phrase "with us" is rather doubtful, especially in view of the fact that New Testament writers do not use it in speaking of Christ's suffering in relation to human sin. As Dale has pointed out, "We are said to suffer with Christ, to be crucified with Him; but Christ is never said to suffer with us".²

All this means that Bushnell does not make full allowance for the fact that Christ's work is substitutionary. To use epigrammatic language, the idea of vicarious sacrifice in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is not as vicarious as one could wish.

The trouble is that Bushnell often gives the impression that man deserves credit for a certain amount of goodness quite apart from Christ. Of course, a sympathetic reading of the book reveals that Bushnell does

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.442.

2. The Atonement - p.137.

not really make such a distinction between Christ's and man's work in the atonement. In his heart, he believes that it is all Christ's work, for he can speak of the Christian as a "Christed" man. Some of his writings, however, suggest quite the contrary, as, for example, his criticism implied in the following quotation will indicate: "The common impression, I am sorry to believe, is different. We cannot atone, it is said, or offer any satisfaction for the sin of the world; we are too little, and low, and deep in sin ourselves".¹ But surely, this must be the position of man apart from Christ. And if he becomes a Christed man able to participate in the work of reconciliation, it is still Christ's work, not his. Paul calls himself "a man in Christ", but he also exclaims with indignation "Was Paul crucified for you?" Any departure from this position is bound to offend the Christian who feels that he must give God all the glory, for it is Christ who has been working in him.

It is possible, however, as the following quotation shows, to exaggerate Bushnell's over-emphasis on the place of man in the work of the atonement. Speaking of Bushnell's theory, T. T. Munger says:

"Its central idea is that it puts the believer directly into the very process by which Christ became a redeemer, and is saving the world;

1. The Vicarious Sacrifice - pp.66-7.

that Christ does nothing for a man beyond what the man himself is required to do for other men, and that it is exactly at this point that the world is redeemed."¹

This is not the Scriptural view of the uniqueness of Christ's work. Such teaching is bound to have a harmful effect on man. To quote Denney's comment made in criticism of a slightly different conception, "it relieves us of the feeling of absolute dependence upon God on which religion hangs, makes us not fellow-workers with Him but allies on the same footing as Himself".²

There is also some danger of Bushnell's theory giving the impression that salvation is won by righteous character. That such an interpretation is possible is proved by the following quotation:

"Since according to all Bushnell's teaching the universe is moral, and salvation is character; since in all ages men have won, and still continue to win noble and saving character as truly outside as within the lines of this cumbersome 'evangelical' system, what, then is the use or need of it"?³

Of course, it must be admitted that this is reading too much into Bushnell's words. It is quoted here as an illustration of the fact that Bushnell gives the impression at times that salvation is won by good character. In his anxiety to show that Christ's spirit produces righteous

character, he fails to stress the truth that even this is

1. Horace Bushnell - p.269.

2. Letters of Principal Denney to his Family and Friends - pp.186-7.

3. See Dole: New World, Vol. 8, p.709.

the gift of God.

(d) The theory fails to do justice to certain ideas

Bushnell attempts to give a complete view of the atonement. Inasmuch as he fails to do justice to certain ideas which are considered to be necessary to any comprehensive theory of the work of Christ, his treatise must be criticised in respect of these themes.

The first of these which may be mentioned is connected with his explanation of Christ's sufferings. His key principle of vicarious love is not wide enough to cover all the facts. A. B. Bruce, in criticism of Bushnell, upheld the position that Christ's sympathy is only one point of view from which to contemplate Christ's humiliation,¹ and with a similar purpose James Orr used the following words:

"He suffered from natural causes - as hunger and thirst, from the unbelief of the world, from the persecutions and malice of His enemies, from temptations of the devil, from the faithlessness and desertion of disciples, etc. Sympathy was only indirectly concerned with all these."²

That Bushnell has given a classic exposition of the vicariousness of sympathetic love does not make amends for this defect.

Again, Bushnell's theory errs by way of defect as regards the social significance of Christ's work. It is a rather curious fact that this criticism cannot be made

1. See 'The Humiliation of Christ' - pp.334-40.

2. The Christian View of God and the World - p.348.

of his earlier writings. The philosophy behind the 'Christian Nurture' is opposed to the extreme individualism of the theology then current in respect that it emphasizes the organic life of the family, the Church, and society. No doubt, it is upon this book that the following remark is based: "No one has ever grasped the conception of a race redemption more strongly or exhibited a loftier faith in the 'outpopulating power of the Christian stock' in the future processes of development".¹ Even in his theory of the atonement in 'God in Christ' Bushnell takes account of the place of the Kingdom of God in the work of Christ.²

In 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', however, he moves away from this valuable ground which he held in his earlier theory. Stressing the effect of self-sacrifice in softening and subduing the heart of the individual person, he does not make full allowance for the law of heredity and its companion principle of the solidarity of the human race. The work of Christ depends for its success to a large extent upon the way in which human lives are linked together. W. Adams Brown has put this well in his criticism of Bushnell and McLeod Campbell: "From the first, it has been recognized that the work of Christ has a larger meaning. It was designed not simply to save individuals,

1. Lewis O. Jastrow - Representative Modern Preachers - p.190.
 2. God in Christ - p.209.

but to redeem humanity, and has as its result the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men".¹

As Stevens has pointed out, the lack of this emphasis in Bushnell is one feature of the doctrine of the atonement in which he differs from Ritschl.²

Further, Bushnell's treatment of the problem of sin - especially as related to God - is not entirely satisfactory. There is certainly not the adequate discussion of this problem that may be found in McLeod Campbell's book. In showing how Christ identifies Himself in love with sinful men, he neglects to stress the other side of the same love - its relation to God in the matter of sin. This means that a wrong impression is given of sin. To quote Denney's criticism of such a view: "there is a tendency to regard sin as a misfortune rather than a fault; sympathy with the sinner is apt to lapse into an extenuating or condoning of sin; it becomes emotional or sentimental, and ceases to be, what it always was in Jesus, ethical and austere."³

Dale has rightly reprehended Bushnell for undervaluing the idea of the remission of sins. Bushnell said that the question of the remission of sins was really the question of the regeneration of character, "the great question how it is that God forgives; or what is the same, accomplishes the restoration of fallen character".⁴ But

1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. V, p.649.

2. See American Journal of Theology, Vol. VI, p.53.

3. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.257.

4. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.245.

this is to confuse a distinction that is at the heart of human nature and which theologians have long recognized. As H. R. Mackintosh has said, "Forgiveness is not the same thing as reformation, or we should not need the two words".¹ Even the analogy of a mother forgiving her wayward son should have taught Bushnell this. The following quotation from Dale was written with specific reference to this passage of Bushnell's and it cannot be improved upon for our purpose:

"That the Remission of sins, if it stood alone, would leave us unsaved, is one of the common-places of Christian theology; but it does not follow that the Remission of sins includes the blessings which are necessary to complete our salvation, or is to be confounded with them. So long as the human heart is conscious of a twofold misery - the misery of being under the tyranny of evil habits which it cannot throw off, and of evil passions which it cannot subdue - it will passionately cry for a twofold deliverance."²

In the light of this, it is not surprising that Bushnell's next book on the atonement should have some fresh material on the subject of forgiveness.

The theory is also one-sided in so far as it does not do justice to the Godward side of the atonement. It is unfair to Bushnell to say that 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is entirely subjective. There is an attempt to treat the Godward side even though it is given only a secondary place.

1. The Christian Experience of Forgiveness - p.120.

2. The Atonement - pp.336-7.

There is not, however, the important position given to it which he later felt to be necessary. He, himself, was willing to admit this for in his later book, he said:

"The argument of my former treatise was concerned in exhibiting the work of Christ as a reconciling power on men. I now propose to substitute, for the latter half of my former treatise, a different exposition; composing thus a whole of doctrine that comprises both the reconciliation of men to God, and of God to men."¹

Another idea to which Bushnell fails to do justice is the attitude of God to penalty. He is rather vague on this point and wavers between two positions - one in which penalty is understood in connection with a personal relationship between God and man; and the other in which it is understood as regards God's relation to natural law. Then, too, the long treatise on Eternal Law is somewhat overdrawn and is far from convincing. Even those like Dale who have accepted the view that law is independent alike of the will and the character of God have declined to take the further step of making God the first subject of law. It is significant that sympathetic students of Bushnell soon dropped this particular aspect of his theory.

(e) The Reliability of his Scripture exegesis

Many critics have suggested that Bushnell, although sincere in his attempt to cover the facts of Scripture, does not always succeed. James Orr said "that in resolving the
1. Forgiveness and Law - p.33.

redeeming efficacy of the sufferings of Christ solely into their moral influence, the theory (of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice') runs directly counter to the explicit and uniform declarations of the New Testament, which put in the foreground their expiatory and propitiary character".¹ Whatever truth there may be in this statement, it cannot be said that Bushnell came to his conclusions through a lack of acquaintance with the words of scripture. The only plausible answer to such criticism is an examination of the reliability of his exegesis.

One critic said that Bushnell's theory "fails to give us any satisfactory explanation of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses of the third chapter of Romans".² As these are key verses in Bushnell's treatise, they seem most suitable for examination in this criticism of his exegesis. Bushnell's paraphrase of them has already been given³ and may now be compared with the following by Sanday and Headlam, the authors of the International Critical Commentary on Romans:

"Whom God set forth as propitiatory - through faith - in His own blood - for a display of His righteousness; because of the passing-over of foregone sins in the forbearance of God with a view to the display of His righteousness at the present moment, so that He might be at once righteous (Himself) and declaring righteous him who has for his motive faith in Jesus."⁴

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1. The Christian View of God and the World - p.350.
 2. Stearns - Present Day Theology - p.378.
 3. Vide supra - p. 166.
 4. p.90.

On the whole, this is much the same as Bushnell's. Two variations may be noted: (1) Instead of "for the remission" as in the Authorized Version and in Bushnell, the I.C.C. has "because of the passing-over". This is based on *παρεσις* meaning "putting aside" - temporary suspension of punishment as compared with *ἀφαισις* meaning "putting away" - complete and unreserved forgiveness; and on "because" rather than "for", the more usual meaning of *διὰ* ; (2) instead of Bushnell's newly created phrase "the righteouser of him", the I.C.C. has "declaring righteous him". No doubt, the word translated in its strict sense means "make righteous", but it must be interpreted as Paul meant it, and long before his day it was used familiarly, in the sense of "declare righteous". Thus, as Sanday and Headlam have said elsewhere in the same commentary, "It cannot mean to 'make righteous'".¹

It may be said, then, that the difference between the two translations is broadly speaking that between Bushnell's idea of remission and the usually accepted one. It will thus be seen that Bushnell's exegesis is on the whole fairly reliable - especially for his day. Munger has said of his sermons that they are "correct enough in exegesis, not because of critical study, but by pure insight and reproduction of events in his imagination".²

The measure of exegetical success which he achieved in his

1. p.30.

2. Horace Bushnell - p.283.

theological treatises may be attributed to the same method. A more detailed review of his exegesis on other passages is not necessary. Whatever criticism might arise would likely be covered already in the more general criticism of his theory.

CHAPTER X

THIRD STAGE - FORGIVENESS AND LAW

(a) Circumstances in which it was written

One of the best proofs of Bushnell's intellectual honesty is his third book on the subject of the atonement. This book, entitled 'Forgiveness and Law', was published in 1874, two years before his death, and was intended to replace Parts Three and Four of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. That volume had been criticized severely but it was not the criticism that made him change his views. Bushnell knew that any change would be attributed to the effects of criticism upon the 1866 volume. It is likely that this made it all the more difficult for him to withdraw a part of the book. "The unexpected arrival of fresh light", however, sometime after the publication of the latter had left him no choice but to give what he considered to be the fuller truth to his reading public. Ill-health made the task a long and laborious struggle but his perseverance enabled him to complete it.

Bushnell's mind was a mind that developed to the end. One of his daughters has said that his "mind has shown itself to be not merely constructive, but reproductive

in an eminent degree. One thought was with him the seed of another thought".^{1.} His work on the atonement is a good example of this. In one sense, it was natural that when 'fresh light' did come to Bushnell it should be on the subject of Christ and forgiveness. Christ had been the centre of his thinking for many years, and the forgiveness of sins is one of the deepest and most central themes in the gospel of Christ.

As might be expected from his work, the change in Bushnell's views was brought about as a result of his study in the preparation of sermons - as he himself puts it - by his "writing on two simple practical subjects". The first discourse was on the inquiry, "How shall a man be able to entirely and perfectly forgive his enemy, so as to forever sweeten the bitterness of his wounded feeling and leave no sense of personal revulsion?"^{2.} This one is the more important of the two, for it sheds light on the most distinctive part of the book.

Fortunately it is not difficult to trace the sermon. As his daughter reveals,^{3.} the sermon on 'Christian Forgiveness'

1. F.L.B. in Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell - p.542.
2. Forgiveness and Law - p.10.
3. Life and Letters - p.542

in the volume 'Christ and His salvation' is the one
^{1.}
 referred to.

Another contributing influence to his thought on forgiveness may be seen earlier - in "the days of accusation". To quote the words of his daughter, F.L.B.:

"for its true germinal idea, we must go much farther back to that noble ideal of forgiveness, shaped many years before with strong travail of soul, in the fires of hostility and moral adversity. His friends saw at the time what that sharp experience was doing for his character, but they did not know that it was to do as much for his thinking. It underlies all his subsequent conceptions, and his last thought was built on it." ^{2.}

It is even possible to quote Bushnell himself, in acknowledgment of the debt he owed to this period of trial. In an undated letter to a correspondent on the subject of forgiveness, he says: "I know what it is to have the purest motives, most fervent prayers, and most incessant labours misapprehended and misrepresented. I know what
^{3.}
 the moral whipping-post means". Not only did the years, when the dispute over Bushnell's views was at its height, leave their mark upon him; the succeeding years also made an important contribution. No one knew better than he how exacting a thing it is to forgive a great wrong, for Bushnell left no stone unturned in his effort

1. Christ and His Salvation - pp.333-351.
2. Life and Letters - p.518.
3. Ibid. - p.519.

to win the confidence of his estranged friends. The difficulties to be overcome were a real test of Christian forgiveness between man and man. It took many years, but in the end Bushnell was at peace with all. There can be no doubt that these experiences taught him many of the principles which are the basis of his profound thinking on the subject of forgiveness.

A rather curious point may be noted in regard to these quotations and the above mentioned sermon of Bushnell's. His daughter has made the statement that he had no
^{1.}unrelated facts - and Munger regards her sentence 'as the most discriminating remark concerning Bushnell that he has
^{2.}ever seen'. It is doubtful, however, if this claim can be made good in all cases. Bushnell seems to have been more interested in ideas as ideas than in relating them to one another. At any rate, this sermon is an exception to his daughter's statement. If it was this discourse which set his mind on the inquiry which led to a revision of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', why did he not make use of the material involved at the time when he wrote 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' in 1866? The sermon was published two years before this date and likely was written some time before that.

1. Life and Letters - p.456.
2. Horace Bushnell - p.331.

No entirely satisfactory answer to this question has been given. The most plausible is that by his reading of certain authors (Wessel and Luther)^{1.} he was awakened to the possibilities in the material he had already used in a sermon but which he had failed to relate to his systematic studies on the atonement.

(b) The importance of the book

A justification of this chapter on 'Forgiveness and Law' would not be necessary were it not that there has been a tendency among theological writers to pass over this last work of Bushnell's.^{2.} Various reasons have been given: (e.g.) the fact that it is a refinement; that no one has ever adopted its theory,^{3.} (a statement which could not be made today); that it has not met with wide acceptance.^{4.} But, surely, the book must be considered on its own merits. Even the very circumstances in which it was written should be enough to command attention. In this respect, it was a mistake that, in later editions, 'Forgiveness and Law' became incorporated as Volume Two of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', the first volume being 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' as originally published.

1. See below - p.218

2. e.g. Munger - Horace Bushnell - p.262.

3. James Orr - The Christian View of God and the World - p.351.

4. Strong - Systematic Theology - vol.2, p.734.

The danger of this arrangement lies in the possibility of the theory of 'Forgiveness and Law' being forgotten or neglected through its identification with the more comprehensive theory of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. Evidence that it is distinct from the theory of the latter is not difficult to find; J.K. Mozley regards the book as sufficient evidence that Bushnell cannot be finally classified in the Abelardian tradition, as would^{1.} be the case if he had not revised the volume of 1866.

Of course, it is only fair to acknowledge that many writers have commented favourably on this book. There seems to be good ground for the opinion that it has received a far better reception in Britain than in America. In the year after its publication, A.B. Bruce helped to introduce the book to Scottish theology by his discussion^{2.} of it in his Cunningham lectures. And shortly after the publication of Munger's book on Bushnell, Salmond said: "his book on 'Forgiveness and Law' is an advance on his treatise 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' of far greater moment than Dr. Munger acknowledges, and has a significance^{3.} which he by no means recognizes". The opinion so frankly

1. The Doctrine of the Atonement - p.174.
2. The Humiliation of Christ - pp.357-360
3. London Quarterly Review - Vol.4, pp.311-2

stated here has been gaining ground ever since.^{1.}

In attempting to outline the argument of 'Forgiveness and Law', the emphasis will be laid on those parts which may be regarded as the direct result of the 'fresh light'. A considerable portion of the book is merely a re-statement of material in the chapters of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' which it was expected to replace. There is a sense in which 'Forgiveness and Law' is a revision, not of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', but of 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology'. For Parts Three and Four of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' are the parts that bear most resemblance to 'God in Christ'. Parts One and Two really contain the greater part of the fresh material of 1866; the other parts being to some extent a re-statement of his earlier position. Now, the latter part is replaced and the result is that the first half of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' combined with 'Forgiveness and Law', as Bushnell intended it to be, constitutes a theory a long way removed from his earliest theory of the atonement. A point may be noted here which is often forgotten - that Bushnell intended

1. See H.R. Mackintosh's reference in his "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness" - pp.185-6.
Also White's in his 'Forgiveness and Suffering' - p.90.

the argument of 'Forgiveness and Law' to be taken along with the first half of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'; he did not expect it to be convincing if taken singly.

(c) The argument

The full title of the book is 'Forgiveness and Law , Grounded in Principles interpreted by Human Analogies', and as usual it is expressive of its contents. Munger has said that "each of his (Bushnell's) great treatises is, with more or less distinctness, an effort to put natural and divine things into some sort of relevance and oneness".^{1.}

Here he makes application of the principle that God's forgiveness is at least as good as, if not better than man's forgiveness. On the principle of "the grand analogy, or almost identity, that subsists between our moral nature and that of God" he concludes "that almost anything that occurs in the workings or exigencies of our moral instincts may even be expected in his".^{2.}

With this in mind, he proceeds to analyze the act of forgiveness in man's experience.

In the first place, forgiveness must be real - not the cheap kind that enables a man to say: "Yes, I forgive him, but I hope never to see him again". But even with those who are sincere in their wishes to forgive their

1. A Library of the World's Best Literature - Vol.5.- p.2910
2. Forgiveness and Law - p.35

enemies there are many failures. With the best of intentions, they find forgiveness impossible because the old fires of animosity spring up again. The explanation of this failure lies in the fact that the person wronged has not mastered "the supreme art of forgiveness" which consists "in finding how to embrace the unworthy as if they were not unworthy".^{1.} This art is the way of propitiation.

Two things are necessary for a full forgiveness: "first, such a sympathy with the wrong doing party as virtually takes his nature; and secondly, a making cost in that nature by suffering, or expense, or painstaking sacrifice and labor".^{2.} The first is the sympathetic love which, in its highest expression, resulted in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. The purpose of the second is to balance and overcome the "powerful and multiform combination of alienated and offended sentiment struggling" in the wronged man's nature.^{3.} These indignations are not to be condemned but rather commended for they spring from the integrity and holiness of his nature. Still, if forgiveness is to be accomplished, the offended sentiment must be propitiated. And this propitiation can be accomplished

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.38.

2. Ibid. - p.40.

3. Ibid. - p.41.

best by his making cost on behalf of his enemy. The result will be "that he is perfectly atoned (at-oned) both with himself and his adversary".^{1.}

Several illustrations follow. With his usual keen insight, Bushnell chooses illustrations in which the offence to be pardoned is grave and even hideous. One is that of a business man who takes a poor man as his partner.^{2.} Failing to respond to the confidence placed in him, the poor man shamefully abuses his trust so that his benefactor is reduced to such utter poverty that even his children are in want. In succeeding years, the industry and virtue of the wronged man helps him to regain his former position, while the vices of the other cause him to lose his ill-gotten gains and to be brought down to want and destitution. All this time the good man has been trying to forgive and forget the wrong, but the face or even the name of his wrong-doer recalls the old sentiments and he feels that he can never really forgive him. However, he hears that his former partner is sinking still lower, and that he and his family are in great want. Unknown to them, he sends in supplies. The malefactor's son being arrested for crime, he supplies the needed bail and thus reveals his name. A terrible disease enters the home of the wrong-doer, and the man of -----

1. Ibid. - p.42.

2. Forgiveness and Law - pp.42-44.

virtue risks his life in ministering to the sick. The wrong-doer's heart is broken and he is in deep contrition. But a change, at least as great, has come over the good man. Bushnell has asked the reader to place himself in the position of the injured party, and he now comes to this conclusion:

"By your painstaking endeavour, and the peril you have borne for your enemy, you are so far reconciled in your own nature that you can now completely forgive, whether he can rightly be forgiven or not. He can not be till he comes into a genuinely right mind, though still you none the less truly forgive. The forgiveness in you is potentially complete, even though it should never be actually sealed upon him." 1.

The analogy is now carried over to the question of God's forgiveness. Here, too, he is very careful to point out that the divine forgiveness cannot be something cheap. He is afraid that his argument will be misread by many whose life is on a low key. Although he did not use it himself, in this book, his advice to a correspondent, who out of sore trouble had written to him on the subject of forgiveness, is worth quoting here: "Set your heart like a flint against every suggestion that cheapens the blood of the dear, great Lamb, and you will as surely get the meaning of Christ crucified, as that He left His life in the world". 2.

Bushnell begins by answering certain possible

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.44
2. Life and Letters - p.519.

objections. Christ does not go to the cross for the reaction that is to be gained, just as we help an enemy not for the reaction it will produce on us, but rather to relieve him in his distress and perhaps to win him to repentance and a good life. Again, the propitiation is not meant to increase God's love but "to work on other unreduceble sentiments that hinder his love". God is not less perfect but more perfect than he would be without these sentiments. "A propitiation is required, not because they are bad, but only to move them aside when they are not wanted".^{1.}

God's holiness does not make forgiveness impossible for him; even among men, the holiest forgive most easily. Neither does the fact that God has a government to maintain restrict His forgiveness. Forgiveness does not obliterate the fact of a wrong, but operates only on, or between, parties personally. Again, he points out that, if tritheism is to be avoided, the propitiation takes place just as truly within God's nature as it does within ours when we "make cost" for an enemy. There is a difference, however, in that the propitiation does not take place transactionally in God. The answer to speculation over that little word "when" is that "there is no such thing as date in God's dispositions".^{2.}

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.54.
 2. Ibid. - p.59.

By His very nature, His forgivenesses were all in Him before Christ came and even before the world was made. To quote an important statement of Bushnell's on the eternal atonement:

"The transactional matter of Christ's life and death is a specimen chapter, so to speak, of the infinite book that records the eternal going on of God's blessed nature within. Being made in his image, we are able to see his moral dispositions, always forging their forgivenesses, under the reactions of endurance and sacrifice, as we do ours. And this is the eternal story of which Christ shows us but a single leaf." 1.

A review of the Scripture use of the terms 'atonement', 'propitiation', and 'expiation', then follows, and is much the same as in his previous book. He still finds no use for the term 'expiation' and condemns it as a classical term which has crept into Christian use but which is not even moral, let alone Christian. With regard to 'propitiation', there is this difference, that now he contends for it as a real propitiation of God, and not just an objective way of speaking of a change that takes place in us.

In answer to the question 'Why does God, in His eternal nature, unlike a human father or mother, need to be propitiated?' Bushnell argues that God requires it, not because He is reluctant to forgive, but because he treats it as a moral affair. A human mother may forgive without

1. Ibid. - p.60.

propitiation, but that is because she has not made it a moral affair. "Let us not," says Bushnell, "be in haste to measure God's forgivenesses by the mother-pardon spilled on a reprobate son. Expecting in God what we boast in her, we should certainly do him great irreverence".¹

In the next chapter, 'Law and Commandment', he returns to the subject on which he had spent so much thought and time in his previous book. His aim is not so much to retract his former teaching as to fill its place with better material. He succeeds but imperfectly. Perhaps, the best thing that can be said about the new material is that it is less involved.

He begins with the question, 'How is the law to be satisfied?' Forgiveness may be a real thing in the personal sense between God and man, but how is it to be related to the Impersonal Law? He finds the key to the answer of this question in Christ's injunction to keep His commandments. That request had set him thinking about the distinction between 'law' and 'commandment'. The former is the more legal, the latter allowing for an element of freedom. Although 'law' usually precedes 'commandment', it is never perfect in itself; it is mostly negative and it provides no inspiration for duty. 'Commandment' can be offered to faith and can rely on the supernatural for its success.

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.77.

He then makes use of several analogies,^{1.} (viz.) a mother training her child, army discipline, etc., showing that, although the training began with a strict obedience of law, the time came when its rigid enforcement was no longer needed. This does not mean that the law is abolished - rather, that its purpose is fulfilled in a far more satisfactory way.

The gospel is likewise a twofold way of discipline. It begins with the penally coercive discipline, but the time comes when this is superseded although not abandoned. It is set for benefit, not for punishment, and there is nothing similar to judicial penalty in it. Even Christ Himself was incarnated into the coercive discipline and His suffering was a result of this incarnation. He came into our discipline bringing His everlasting liberties with Him, and overtopping everything in it by His glorious and sublime personality. And by faith in His person we are able to master the sins which held us in their power while we were under the law alone. "The abstract, tabulated law is fulfilled and crowned in the personal commandment".^{2.}

The next chapter, 'Justification by Faith', is from much the same point of view as the one of the same title in -----

1. See Forgiveness and Law - pp.120-9.
2. Forgiveness and Law - p.175.

his previous book and need not be reviewed here. The last chapter, 'Threefold Doctrine of Christ concerning Himself' is based on the text St. John 16: 9-11.^{1.} Bushnell intended it to be used, not as a rival doctrine, but as a duplicate view, in order to remove many of the literalities of the old doctrine. The conviction of sin, according to this teaching of Christ, is to come not by law but the gospel -^{2.} "as being melted in by the suffering goodness of Christ". In the same way, Christ's reproving of righteousness has no connection with the hard scheme of legal justification. His reproving of judgment, too, is a way in which all are judged not by force but by the display of goodness, especially in the majesty of moral suffering.

(d) The "originality" of Bushnell's new idea of the atonement

Before passing any criticism on the theory of 'Forgiveness and Law', a few observations may be made on the question of the originality of the most important idea of the book - that of the doctrine of the atonement as the cost of forgiveness to God. This was an idea which had received little or no emphasis before Bushnell wrote so passionately on it. The phrase "making cost" which has become a classic

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1. Ibid - p.218. Note: a sermon on this text is included in the 1864 volume. (Christ and His Salvation) - pp.98-118
The question again arises, why did he not use this material in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' ?
2. Ibid - p.254.

in theological language, was coined by him. Indeed, as far as the idea behind it is concerned, for some time theologians thought that in it Bushnell had produced an original idea - a very rare thing in theological circles in these days. In his discussion of the idea in his book, 'The Christian Experience of Forgiveness', H.R. Mackintosh pays Bushnell the following noble tribute: "I have not succeeded in tracing the idea further back than Horace Bushnell, and his was an intelligence so free and rich that the phrase may well have been of his own minting. No one was ever readier to lift the anchor and steer his own way"^{1.} In a later edition of his book, Dr. Mackintosh acknowledges that the idea "is to be found in many passages of Luther"^{2.} and, in colloquio, he has suggested that germs of the idea may be found still further back. In keeping with this is the claim of Denney that "Christians have felt from the beginning, that in Christ God did somehow take part with sinners against Himself"^{3.} In the light of all this, it may be concluded that, although the distinction of having contributed an original idea to theology cannot be claimed for Bushnell, it

1. The Christian Experience of Forgiveness - pp.185-6.
2. Ibid. - p.191.
3. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.100.

may be said that he gave prominence to one which had long been unnoticed in Luther.

In Luther's theology the idea is not presented side by side with its human analogy as in Bushnell's book; and therefore it is not as clear. To Gustaf Aulén must go the credit for giving prominence in recent years to the idea in Luther's theology. He claims that "Luther's chief interest is to show how much the atoning work (if the phrase may be permitted) ^{1.} costs God". The following quotation from the passage in which Aulén expounds Luther is made in order that its close similarity to Bushnell may be noted; it is important enough to justify its length:

"But although the Wrath of God is identical with His will, yet it is, according to Luther, a 'tyrant', even the most awful and terrible of all the tyrants. It is a tyrant in that it stands opposed to the Divine love. At this point the idea of God's own conflict and victory is brought by Luther to a paradoxical sharpness beyond anything that we have hitherto met; it would seem almost as if the conflict were carried back within the Divine Being itself. Let us look again at part of our previous quotation from the Commentary on Galatians: 'The curse, which is the Wrath of God against the whole world, was in conflict with the blessing - that is to say, with God's eternal grace and mercy in Christ. The curse conflicts with the blessing, and would condemn it and altogether annihilate it, but it cannot. For the blessing is divine and eternal, therefore the curse must yield. For if the

1. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.100.
2. Christus Victor - p.133.

blessing in Christ could yield, then God Himself would have been overcome. But that is impossible." 1.

Bushnell, himself, thought that he was saying something entirely new on the subject^{2.} and we believe that he was sincere. There are two possible explanations of how he came by the idea, and each may be true to some extent. The first is that Bushnell rediscovered the idea for himself. The second is that, unconsciously, he owed something either directly or indirectly to Luther and perhaps to other authors. The fact that Bushnell, while preparing his 'Forgiveness and Law', had been studying Luther's "Epistle to the Galatians"^{3.} throws the evidence in favour of the unconscious direct influence of Luther. One wonders if there is sufficient evidence to warrant the statement that this is the source of Bushnell's great idea.

There is one further source that may be mentioned. Bushnell, himself, quotes the paradoxical but very suggestive statement of the pre-reformer, John Wessel (died in 1489) : "God Himself, Himself the priest, Himself the victim,"

1. Christus Victor - p.130. Note: the quotation is from the passage on Gal.3:13 in Luther's Longer Commentary on Galatians.
2. See Forgiveness and Law - p.14 where he says: "It will be understood, I presume, that I suppose the two revised statements, or solutions of doctrine I am now going to propound to be really new. I frankly allow that I do..."
3. See Forgiveness and Law - p.208.

for Himself, of Himself, to Himself, made the satisfaction".^{1.}
 This statement has many points of similarity to Bushnell's theory. It may be that this idea, combined with half-forgotten ideas received from Luther, threw light upon the material in his sermon on Christian Forgiveness referred to above. All these things set his fermenting mind working. The result was the theory of 'Forgiveness and Law' - a theory which has its points of kinship with these older ideas; but which, though its freshness and the clear cut lines upon which it is drawn, makes such an impression upon the reader that it almost justifies the claim of its author to be something "really new".

(e) Favourable criticism

Enough has already been said in this chapter to give the impression that the idea of the atonement as "the cost of forgiveness" is one of Bushnell's contributions to modern theological thought. This remains true, whatever may be said in adverse criticism of the particular use of it in 'Forgiveness and Law'. Even as Bushnell uses it, there is much to commend in it. It enables him to lay still greater emphasis on a side of the atonement which had been well stressed in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. It gives abundant scope to the

1. Ibid. - p.58.

principle that God's forgiveness as well as men's must act in a way that does not demoralize. And it emphasizes in a way that 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' does not, the great truth that the initiation of the work of atonement lies with God.

As this indicates, 'Forgiveness and Law' has many of the good features of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' while, at the same time, it avoids to some extent its big weakness - the lack of an adequate explanation of the death of Christ. This time there is a straight-forward, and not merely a rhetorical, explanation of propitiation. Of course, there is a sense in which he has only transferred the difficulty rather than overcome it, by the way in which he refers it to the eternal nature of God. Along with this approximation to the older theories, there is also his teaching that Christ was 'incarnated into the curse' as a necessary condition of His freeing men out of the curse. It is true that he did touch on this in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'^{1.}, but there he did not work it into his theory in the same way as he does in 'Forgiveness and Law'.

It is only fair to add that in these revisions Bushnell did not return to the position of the old theories which had first offended him. As he himself said, "the corrections I am proposing to make do not include a return

1. See p.156 for quotation from 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'.

to any of the standard theologic formulas I have hitherto rejected. I recant no one of my denials".^{1.} This claim has been generally acknowledged by reviewers of his book, (e.g.) Williston Walker: "his theory was far from being the old one of a sacrifice to satisfy justice".^{2.}

His explanation of God's forgiveness based on the analogy of man's forgiveness, while it has its weak points, as will be noted below, has also much that may be commended in it. It helps to make forgiveness a very real thing to men. From the fact of forgiveness in men, Bushnell advances on the principle of our Lord, 'If you, who are evil, can show such pardoning love to your children, much more will your heavenly Father freely forgive those who turn from their sins to Him', to forgiveness in God. This in itself is a sufficient answer to those who argue that forgiveness is impossible.

The value of 'Forgiveness and Law' lies not merely in its direct teaching but in its suggestiveness. Bushnell has a way of presenting a subject so that he opens it up to the reader and sets him thinking. This is true of most of his books but especially so of his last. This has been well put by H.R. Mackintosh who describes it as

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1. Forgiveness and Law - p.12.
 2. Bushnell Centenary - p.33.

"an exceptionally attractive and rewarding path of approach,
with collateral advantages of various kinds".^{1.}

(f) Unfavourable criticism^{2.}

In the first place, it may be pointed out that there is a sense in which the very circumstances in which the book was written tell against it. Some people have felt that a writer who had changed his mind so often on this theme was not likely to be settled - even on his third attempt. Of course, it may have worked to Bushnell's advantage in that some would believe that a man who had explored the subject so thoroughly must surely have reached truth. That this latter opinion was not always held is evident from the fact that A.B. Bruce makes the suggestion that "one who claims to have got new light, and by the very claim confesses previous partial error, ought to avoid the oracular style, and to speak with the modesty of one who feels he may have to confess to yet further changes of view".^{3.}

Again, as Munger has pointed out, the book "is regarded as a refinement, and refinements in theology are not now popular, even if they are true".^{4.} This may account for -----

1. The Christian Experience of Forgiveness - p.186.
2. Note: not all the criticisms considered in this section are accepted. Some are rejected as unfair to Bushnell.
3. The Humiliation of Christ - p.358.
4. Horace Bushnell - p.262.

the charge that 'Forgiveness and Law' is obscure;^{1.} it is not obscure, although it may be admitted that it is not as clear as 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. Then, too, it depends too much on the latter to make much headway by itself. It tells against it that it was never published along with the first half of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', as Bushnell intended it to be. All these criticisms are more or less on the surface and should make no difference to the historical student of theology.

More serious is the charge that the theory of 'Forgiveness and Law' is "extremely anthropomorphic",^{2.} or as another writer puts it "anthropomorphism run mad".^{3.} Certainly, the words of Bushnell give some grounds for this criticism. It is when his theory is compared with Luther's that one realizes how anthropomorphic it is. There is a danger of his language giving an impression of unreality - something of the kind that is suggested in the familiar illustration of a game of draughts in which a man plays with his right hand against his left. Robert Mackintosh has interpreted Bushnell's book as teaching that "God therefore - if we may dare the paraphrase - worked himself into a

1. J.K. Mozley - The Doctrine of Atonement - p.174. Also G.B. Stevens - The Christian Doctrine of Salvation - p.444.
2. R.S. Franks - The Doctrine of the Work of Christ, Vol.2, p.413.
3. M.H. Hutton - Catholic Presbyterian, Vol.2, p.130.

forgiving disposition by the mission of Christ and by His share in Christ's sufferings".¹ This, however, seems to be reading too much into Bushnell's words. Bushnell is very careful to explain that God does not suffer in order to become propitious but by suffering becomes propitious.² He also avoids this criticism by his statement that God's propitiation is above time.

Perhaps, the best explanation of Bushnell's tendency to an anthropomorphic conception of God is that he fails to see, or at least to account for, the fact that there is a point at which all analogy between God and man breaks down. This was one of the weaknesses of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' and it is even more prominent here. Of course, it must be admitted that at the beginning of 'Forgiveness and Law' Bushnell does make allowance for this - he uses the word "almost".³ This, however, does not save him, for, once he is launched into the explanation of his theory, he forgets all about it. Munger was aware of this defect in Bushnell's thinking: "If he (Bushnell) is ever at fault, it is in overworking the apparent likeness of one thing to another".⁴

There are some vital points of difference between man's forgiveness and God's forgiveness. These are well summed up in the following quotations. The first

1. Historic Theories of Atonement - p.257.

2. Forgiveness and Law - p.53.

3. See above - p.207.

4. Horace Bushnell - p.266.

is by H. R. Mackintosh in a passage in which he reviews Herrmann's theology:

"For one thing, man's pardon of man is sharply limited to the circumstances of a particular offence; it does not and cannot cover the man's whole life. No one can forgive his neighbour's sin. For another thing, man's power to forgive man is undermined by his own sinfulness, which leaves him with nothing more than ability to condone this or that particular fault or shortcoming."¹

The second is from R. W. Dale:

"The easy solution of all difficulties about the Remission of sins, suggested by the obligation resting on ourselves to forgive those who have sinned against us, ignores the fundamental distinction between the relations of individual men to each other and their common relation to God. As individuals, we have no right to punish other men for their sins against us, because we have no authority over them."²

Bushnell is bound to get into difficulty when he neglects to account for these differences. It is true that he helps to bridge the gap between the two by taking forgiveness in man at a very high plane. But even at that, Bushnell's theory does not allow for the possibility that some things necessary in man's forgiveness of man may not be required in God's forgiveness of man. To quote Hutton's criticism of the theory, "it makes our human necessity admirable, and concludes that God cannot act without it".³

F. H. Foster has accused Bushnell of making

"God inferior to what good men are commanded to be and are".⁴

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1. The Christian Experience of Forgiveness - pp.46-7.
 2. The Atonement - p.383.
 3. Catholic Presbyterian - Vol. 2, p.130.
 4. A History of New England Theology - p.421.

To what extent is this criticism justified? The answer seems to lie in making clear in the human analogy the distinction between forgiving a penitent and an impenitent man. A good man is able to forgive an impenitent man without going to the trouble of making cost after the man has become penitent. If Bushnell is to be judged by his illustration of a mother pardoning her prodigal son,¹ he disagrees with this statement. But is he not giving away more than he need? Surely, he is wrong in arguing that the mother's pardon of her penitent son is not real. The mother, if she be worthy of the name, has already borne the load of her son's sins and no further making cost is needed to make the pardon real.

In man's forgiveness of impenitent man, making cost does seem necessary. Whether it is because he propitiates himself or because his making cost, by heaping coals of fire on the offender's head, produces a state of penitence in him may be left an open question. Bushnell's theory really leaves the way open for both interpretations. Now, when the analogy is transferred to God, it is always impenitent sinners that God has to forgive. In the light of this, it may be concluded that Foster's criticism is not justified.

Munger has made a somewhat similar criticism of the theory, claiming that "it seems to detract from simple

1. Forgiveness and Law - p.77.

love, which needs nothing to complete itself, and certainly in God needs nothing to start it into exercise. It savors of the schools and the systems and the schemes rather than of the simple human love that overspreads the life of Christ."¹ This criticism fails to note that the propitiation in Bushnell's theory is not in time, with the result that the love Christ reveals is the simple love that Munger desires. Bushnell would likely add that "it needs nothing to start it into exercise" just because the propitiation is eternal.

Criticism of Bushnell's teaching in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' that Christ's suffering is the earthly counterpart and manifestation of the suffering of God from all eternity was reserved for this chapter because Bushnell gives it a fuller treatment in 'Forgiveness and Law'. Munger (speaking of 'Forgiveness and Law' as the second volume of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice') described it as "simply a re-emphasis or extension of the patipassianism that runs through all its pages".² In the form in which Bushnell taught it, it was new in his day - indeed, it has been claimed that Bushnell was the first to formulate it.³ At first, it was criticized severely but since his time it has gained many warm sup-

1. Horace Bushnell - p.267.

2. Bushnell Centenary - p.45.

3. R. Mackintosh - Historic Theories of Atonement - p.252.

porters.

Two stages have been distinguished in Bushnell's theory.¹ In the first, he is contending for the idea that God can feel and against the idea of the old creed - "without body, parts, or passions." This idea of Bushnell has met with general approval.

The second is the placing of "suffering qua suffering in the psychosis of God Himself".² The objection has been made that this denies that God who knows the end of all things and sees them as a whole is happy through his assurance of the final victory of love. Bushnell, however, affirms God's happiness as well as His suffering. This leads Robert Mackintosh to describe Bushnell as "a rhetorician, though a lofty and noble rhetorician, rather than a thinker".³ This remark is hardly fair to Bushnell. In an age when paradox in theology has come to the fore, and especially on a question involving the relations of time and eternity where antimonies may be expected, he cannot be condemned for affirming both God's happiness and God's suffering. Maybe, he over-emphasized the latter but this was due to the need of stressing it in order to bring home the truth.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. - p.253.

3. Ibid. - p.254.

The last criticism that will be made has in many ways the most weight of all - namely, that Bushnell transfers the atonement from the cross of Calvary to God in heaven. At first, the impression is given that 'Forgiveness and Law' through its theory of a real propitiation is a vast improvement on 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' so far as the subject of the death of Christ is concerned. But after more mature consideration, one is apt to be disappointed.

Bushnell found the idea of eternal atonement a very useful and even necessary answer to the charge that he taught that there was a time when God could not forgive. It helped him over a difficulty which had puzzled Augustine and many others - why "the love which came from God Himself in Christ should make any difference in God's attitude to man".¹ But in avoiding this, he ran into a worse error, and gave "Christ's work something of a docetic character".² In another age, his position would have left him open to taunts similar to that which Tertullian applied to Praxeas, "that one of the two jobs Praxeas had done for the devil at Rome was to crucify the Father."³ At any rate, Bushnell's theory leaves Christ out of His essential place in the atonement. That Christ died on Calvary merely to reveal some-

1. See Denney - The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.60.

2. Orr - The Christian View of God and the World - p.351.

3. See H. R. Mackintosh - The Person of Jesus Christ - p.150

thing of the Father's sufferings in heaven is not the teaching of Scripture. In Robert Mackintosh's bald statement, "not to age-long pain in heaven, but to one sharp immeasurable sacrifice of sorrow upon earth, we owe our deliverance in the blood of Christ,"¹ there is much with which Bushnell does not deal.

1. Historic Theories of Atonement - p.256.

CHAPTER XI

THE INFLUENCE OF BUSHNELL

To avoid misunderstanding, this chapter is prefaced with the remark that it is only the influence - direct and indirect - of Bushnell's doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ that is considered here. Bushnell had considerable influence upon theological thought in other ways: (e.g.) upon religious education by his 'Christian Nurture', and upon apologetics by his 'Nature and the Supernatural'; but an estimate of his influence on these subjects does not come within the scope of this treatise. In order, however, to appreciate the influence of his teaching on the person and work of Christ, we must give some consideration to his general influence on theology.

(a) The difficulty of estimating his influence

To estimate the influence of Bushnell's thinking is a difficult task. This is partly due to the fact that it is not yet sixty years since he died; six decades is a very brief period of time in the history of theological thought. It seems all the shorter because Bushnell's contribution to theological thought was not recognized to any considerable extent during his life time. Public attention had been fixed upon his "heresies" in such a way as to miss his real theological thought. It is true that he came to be recognized as a great Christian preacher, but

there was little recognition of him as a man who had profoundly influenced theological thought such as was given to McLeod Campbell in his last years. With Bushnell, however, the intervening years have helped to make amends for this neglect. As Munger has pointed out, "Since modern thought and criticism have prevailed, he has fared more justly, and has gained in standing as a theologian".¹

Another explanation of the difficulty in estimating his influence may be found in the character of his theological thought. It is not systematic and he himself gave the impression that he cared very little about making it systematic with the result that no school of his followers has been founded. It is true that his theology contains many fine and distinctive ideas which have been taken up by admiring disciples; but the latter have made no pretence of belonging to a 'Bushnellian' school, and there has never been a serious attempt to describe his theology as 'Bushnellism'.

Still another reason may be found in the fact that his teaching, while failing to win others wholeheartedly to his point of view, has by its extraordinary suggestiveness stirred them to active thought either by way of a development of his views or by way of reaction.

In most cases, these theologians are unaware of the in-

1. Horace Bushnell - p.412.

fluence and naturally do not acknowledge it. Bushnell's "unconscious influence", though difficult to estimate, may be regarded as considerable.

(b) Influence in preparing the way for a transition

An important phase of Bushnell's influence consisted in his preparation of the American religious mind for the impending transition period in theology. His work in his native land was partly that of a John the Baptist. He did much to prepare the way for the incoming tide of German and English theological thought. It was well that the way was prepared by one whose evangelical zeal helped to dispel the fears of anxious Christian people. Williston Walker has said of these changes:

"That when they did come they created no more conflict than actually occurred was due in considerable measure, at least in the North-eastern part of the United States to the work of Horace Bushnell, who with slight knowledge of what was in progress abroad, wrought on similar lines, presented an altered basis for theological conviction, and made their pathway easier for many when the time of transition and restatement arrived."¹

And T. T. Munger has said: "It is now generally acknowledged that he (Bushnell) led the way into the new world of theological thought which has opened so widely, and thereby rendered great and enduring service to the Christ-

1. Great Men of the Christian Church - p.359.

ian faith".¹ A considerable portion of this influence was in the field of Christology and soteriology,

(c) General influence upon theology

A few paragraphs may be devoted to a consideration of the general influence of Bushnell's teaching on the person and work of Christ upon theology. The following references give some idea of his influence in America. Leonard Bacon, writing in the 'New Englander' shortly after Bushnell's death, said of 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology':

"His influence embodied in those volumes has contributed much to make our New England theology - let me rather say, all the evangelical theology of our English tongue - less rigidly scholastic, more Scriptural, broader in its views, more inspiring in its relations to the pulpit and to the Christian life."²

Williston Walker speaking of his general influence has said: "He had a vast influence upon theology in America".³ And again, at the Bushnell Centenary: "He (Bushnell) has been increasingly a power in religious thinking among us".⁴ There is, then, a good deal of truth in the description of Bushnell as "the father of the later constructive development of American theology as was Jonathan Edwards of the earlier".⁵ Indeed, it is quite possible that much of the influence upon American theology that is attributed

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1. A Library of the World's Best Literature, Vol. 5, p.2909.
 2. As quoted in Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell - p.246.
 3. Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th edition) Vol.4, p.873a.
 4. Bushnell Centenary - p.34.
 5. J. W. Buckham - Progressive Religious Thought in America-p.6.

to German theologians is really due to Bushnell. As F. H. Foster has said:

"It is a sad commentary on the superficiality of much of what styles itself 'thought' that in Bushnell's own land he has been so ignored and the inferior Ritschl so much quoted - and that often by men who owe, historically, every valuable thought they have to the great American."¹

If Bushnell's general influence upon theology has been great in America, it has also been of no small magnitude in Britain. Evidence of this may be found in the fact that such a theologian as R. W. Dale, who was in close touch with the theological situation in his day, and who was certainly not biassed in Bushnell's favour, once referred to him as "an eminent theological writer whose books have exerted a powerful influence on the religious thought of large numbers of Christian people both in this country (Britain) and in America".²

Bushnell's influence upon theological thought in Europe is difficult to trace and may be regarded as almost negligible. It is significant that in the references to Bushnell in such German encyclopaedias as Hauck's *Realencyklopädie*³ and 'Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart',⁴ only English books are mentioned. It is true that Dorner gives some space to Bushnell in his histories of theology but it cannot be inferred from this

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1. A History of the New England Theology - pp.412-3.
 2. Christian Doctrine - pp.253-4.
 3. See Volume 15, p.741, line 52.
 4. See Volume 1, p.1383.

that Bushnell influenced German theology directly.

Two explanations of this lack of acquaintance with Bushnell's theology among German theologians may be given. One is the distance of Europe from America and the unexpectedness of finding a fresh contribution to theology in a land that had hitherto been almost barren in that field. This difficulty was not so serious in view of the fact that Bushnell's books were reprinted in London and favourably noticed in British journals. The other explanation is that by the time some notice of Bushnell might be expected in Germany, the German religious world was occupied with the work of Albrecht Ritschl, whose contribution to German thought was similar to that of Bushnell to English speaking lands. Naturally, there was not much demand for Bushnell's theology in Germany. The same thing may be said of his influence on French theology. As has been pointed out above,¹ the French fideistic school of Bouvier,² Ménégoz, and Sabatier, which is also closely akin to Ritschlianism, has worked along the same lines as Bushnell.³

(d) Influence upon preaching

1. See above - p.39.
2. See American Journal of Theology, Vol. 6, (1902) p.41 for Stevens' reference to the points of similarity between Bushnell and Bouvier.
3. Note: even in the light of the above statement, it is rather strange that Jean Rivi re in his 'Le Dogme de La Redemption', (1914) while he made many references to English writers such as McLeod Campbell and Dale, and also to American writers such as F.H.Foster and G.B. Stevens, made no mention of Bushnell.

The influence of Bushnell's theology upon preaching will be considered as regards: (1) his own preaching; and (2) the preaching of others. Not only is the theology of the preacher influenced by his preaching, but the preaching of the theologian always bears the marks of his theology. Especially is this true of Bushnell. One has only to look over the titles of his sermons to be convinced that he was a man who had thought deeply on religious subjects. With very few changes many of his sermons - and especially those in 'Christ and His Salvation' - could have been used as lectures on the Person and Work of Christ in the Divinity class room. There is ample justification for the statement that "no American preacher within the last century has succeeded in introducing more theology into the pulpit or in discussing theological problems in a more interesting and effective manner than he".¹

The influence of Bushnell's theology on his own sermons does not stop there, for these sermons have been the means of extending his influence to a much wider circle of readers than would otherwise have been possible. From the day of their publication, they won him readers in his own land.² Their reception in other English speaking lands has been equally enthusiastic.³ The

1. Lewis O. Brastow - Representative Modern Preachers - p.148.

2. See Life and Letters - p.415.

3. See statement of G. A. Smith on the next page.

influence of his theology through his sermons is increasing rather than decreasing. At the end of last century, Munger prophesied that Bushnell's "theological treatises will be read less and less as time goes on", but that "his sermons will live on in the world of literature."¹ There is evidence already that his prophecy is being fulfilled, for his sermons are by far the most popular of his works to-day.

The influence of Bushnell's theology upon the preaching of others, though somewhat vague, is nevertheless real. In a section below, reference is made to individual preachers who have acknowledged their debt to Bushnell. There can be no doubt that these are only a few of the countless number who have been stimulated by the freshness and vigour of his thought. His theological works - well described as "homiletic theology"² - because of their emphasis on the practical side of the subject are such as to appeal to a preacher. Even where his theological treatises have not been studied, his influence has come through his sermons. Munger quotes the saying of George Adam Smith, made in colloquio, "that Bushnell is the preacher's preacher, as Spenser is the poet's poet, and that his sermons are on the shelves of every manse in Scotland".³ If this be true of Scotland, there can be no doubt that it is not less true in his own land. It is not too much to say that no one in recent

1. Horace Bushnell - p.287.

2. Brastow - Representative Modern Preachers - p.185.

3. Horace Bushnell - p.279.

times has contributed more to the working theology of the evangelical church.

(e) Influence on Christology

Bushnell's influence upon Christological thinking has been greatest in his own land, and especially in New England. It is true that his book 'God in Christ' was read in Britain in the years immediately following its publication but it was not read widely, and it was left to other writers to accomplish there what Bushnell had set out to do for the United States.

Lest the above paragraph give a wrong impression, it should be added that Bushnell has influenced British Christology to a greater extent than any other American writer. The fact of Bushnell's contribution to Christological thought ranking above that of any of his fellow countrymen is evident from his being the only American whose theology is discussed in such works as Dorner's 'History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ',¹ and H. R. Mackintosh's 'The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ'.²

Although it is difficult to point to specific instances in which Bushnell has influenced American Christology, there can be no doubt of his general influence in this field. There is, indeed, a sense in which his treatment of the subject has made his influence a narrowing one,

1. See Div. 2, Vol. 3 - pp.306-10 and 457-60 (appendix)

2. See p.278.

but, in view of the theological situation in his day, it need not be unduly condemned, but may even be commended. As has been said, his influence "is in many ways comparable to that of Ritschl. On the whole he deprecated unprofitable curiosity, peering into impracticable questions".¹

Perhaps his greatest contribution has consisted in making theology Christocentric once again. It was pointed out above² that when Bushnell arrived on the scene, New England theology had almost lost Christ in a maze of trivial and often irrelevant questions. He did much to revive the true conception of Christ: the fact that Christ was the centre of his own thoughts for over two score years was sufficient in itself to make his contribution effective in this direction. As one writer has said, "The church of America has not yet realized to the full the Christ-ward tendency and outcome of Bushnell's influence, nor the true greatness of the conception of Christ which he has given to her."³ The following quotation from an article by G. B. Stevens strengthens the evidence:

"The true task of our time is to Christianize theology. To this task no man among us has given a greater impulse than Horace Bushnell. I have sought to show that the thought of our own

1. Ibid.

2. See pp.23-4.

3. J. W. Buckham - Progressive Religious Thought in America - p.26.

day is taking up this task and, in no small degree, working it out on the lines struck out by him."¹

Bushnell's influence on the doctrine of the Christian Trinity has not been of such permanent value, although as regards his own generation it was considerable. As Williston Walker has put it, "Bushnell's thoughts regarding the Trinity, though pitched upon most prominently by his opponents, have had scant currency and have excited little real interest".² The more favourable estimate of T. T. Munger is also worth quoting:

"'God in Christ' did not defend historic orthodoxy, nor did it place the doctrine of the Trinity where it stands to-day, but it served the purpose of a diversion against the charges of tritheism, and it checked the recasting of church creeds into tritheistic terms - a measure that had been adopted to stop the growing heresy".³

Perhaps, Bushnell's most constructive contribution to this theme came by way of reaction. Indirectly, he struck a severe blow at Unitarianism by helping to remove one of the chief weaknesses in the orthodox Trinitarianism of his day.

(f) Influence on development of Doctrine of Atonement

Bushnell's influence on theology has been greatest in the field of the atonement. It may be admitted that this influence has not always been constructive. There is a sense in which F. H. Foster's criticism is true: "The influence of this theory of the atonement has actually been to

1. American Journal of Theology, Vol. 6, p.56.

2. American Church History (Vol. 3. Congregationalists) p.392.

3. Horace Bushnell - p.392.

lower the plane of theological thought and to lead to denials of the positive statements of the Bible".¹ Foster goes on to explain that many of Bushnell's followers have accepted only one side of the "moral theory" - that which states that God wins sinful men through the display of His love in Christ's life and death. Essential parts of the theory upon which Bushnell laid great stress, such as the idea of the sanctification of the law by Christ's obedience, and of future punishment, and of the humiliation of Christ, have been allowed to drop out of sight. It is rather strange that Bushnell's remark in his preface to 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' has proved to be a prophecy regarding his own book: "As all choice seedlings are apt to degenerate in their successive propagations, we are obliged to admit that this original, first form of the doctrine was incomparably better than almost any of the revisions, or enlarged expositions of it since given".² Of course, Bushnell can only be held partly responsible for this influence, and in due time the natural swing of the pendulum should restore the proper perspective.

On the whole, however, Bushnell's influence on thought about the atonement has been beneficial. One

1. A History of the New England Theology - p.421.

2. The Vicarious Sacrifice - p.xv-xvi.

cannot doubt the fact that he has done a great deal to bring the "moral theory" of the atonement to the fore in modern thought. There is much evidence of this in his native land. Munger, writing in 1896, said:

"The fact remains that it ('The Vicarious Sacrifice') introduced into New England theology the moral view of the atonement, and largely supplanted the existing view. The doctrine now preached in New England, with modifications indeed, and with much of independent interpretation is that which runs through this treatise."¹

Even when it is admitted that the "independent interpretation" has sometimes "toned down" Bushnell's strong points, it still remains true that, compared with the theories of his own day, the change has been in the right direction.

The evidence, however, is not confined to New England. In some form or other, the theory has come to be recognised by most theologians. Stevens has pointed out² that, out of a symposium of seventeen articles by representative modern theologians³ on this theme, "ten illustrate the moral view". It would be unfair to claim that Bushnell alone was responsible for the predominance of this view, but he must receive credit for his share, not only in his own land, but abroad. His books were published in London as well as in the United States and were widely read - especially 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' -

1. Prophets of the Christian Faith - pp.186-7.

2. The Christian Doctrine of Salvation - p.352.

3. See 'The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought'

and there can be no doubt of his influence throughout the English-speaking lands.

That Bushnell has gained a recognized place among exponents of theories of the atonement is evident from a study of any historical book on the subject - and especially those of recent years.¹ It is quite likely that in future histories of the doctrine of the atonement greater space will be devoted to a discussion of his theory.

Mention may be made of a few specific directions in which Bushnell influenced the development of the doctrine. His emphasis on the necessity of interpreting the atonement through the incarnation has had a considerable influence. Munger has said that "since his day the eye of theology in New England has been fixed on the Incarnation as the central doctrine".²

Again, it may be pointed out that the influence of Bushnell's thought of God as suffering throughout all eternity has been great. The idea permeates all his thinking, but it is most apparent in his last two books on the atonement, and through them it has appealed to a wide circle of readers. That it is held by many outstanding theologians to-day is all the more significant when it is remembered that in Bushnell's day his teaching of the con-

1. See Robert S. Franks - A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ (1918)

Robert Mackintosh - Historic Theories of Atonement (1920)

2. Horace Bushnell - p.402.

ception was almost unique.

Further, his emphasis on the idea of the cost of forgiveness both to God and to man could not fail to produce considerable results. Although the idea is well stressed in his two main books on the atonement, it does not appear clearly until his last volume; preparation, however, had been made for it in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' by his teaching that suffering on behalf of others is involved in the very nature of Christian love. The influence of such an idea, while likely to be far-reaching, is not likely to be acknowledged to any great extent.

Not only has Bushnell influenced the consideration of the atonement directly by his own writing, but he has had considerable influence by way of reaction. On this subject, as with most subjects on which he wrote, he endeavoured to set people thinking rather than to lead them to accept his statements blindly. He was not disappointed that his early books stirred up the tempest which almost swept him into a heresy trial; rather he was glad to have aroused interest in the subjects under discussion. His influence in this respect did not soon die down. Some of the best constructive books on the atonement since his time have been written with his theory in mind. Especially is this true of R. W. Dale's 'The Atonement', for the author

had Bushnell's 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' continually before him.¹

Bushnell did much to broaden the current conception of the atonement. At the same time, he helped by example and by teaching to lead others to approach the subject in a humble spirit. In a review of 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology', published in the 'New Englander' in 1879, Leonard Bacon said:

"Yet on that theme (the atonement) he has been an efficient teacher, even of many who protest against his teachings. If, in their understandings of him, he has too little regarded those illustrations of the Atonement which theologians, and especially our New England theologians, have drawn from the nature of a moral government, he has nevertheless taught even the most scholastic and logical expositors, that the saving work for which He who was at once the Son of God and the Son of Man came into our human world and lived and died, is a theme too large, too transcendent, in its relations to the infinite and the eternal, to be illustrated by any one analogy or to be comprehended and carried about in any formula."²

If his early work gave this impression, it is certain that it was deepened by the work of his later years -

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1. For direct references see pp. XLVII-LII of the preface to the Seventh Edition. Also pp. 132, 136, 164, 166, 336-8, 342, 346, 357, 479-487, and 495. The book may be said to have grown out of two articles by the author in the British Quarterly Review in 1866 and 1867. It is significant that the first one was a review of Bushnell's 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'.
 2. As quoted in his 'Life and Letters' - p. 246.

long years in which he continually meditated on his favourite theme, published his books and then withdrew them in part in order to advance what he considered to be the fuller truth. It is significant that the more he studied the subject, and the more his approach to it widened, the humbler his attitude to it became.

It must be admitted that the greater part of Bushnell's influence, so far as the atonement is concerned, is due to 'The Vicarious Sacrifice'. 'God in Christ' served only as an introduction, and that mainly in New England. The wide-spread influence of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' is undisputed. The extent of the influence of 'Forgiveness and Law' is not so readily admitted. On the whole, American writers have tended to discredit its influence. In 1899, Munger made the statement that "it awoke less interest than any other of his treatises";¹ and in 1902, Williston Walker claimed that it had "won far less interest"² than the 1866 volume. British writers have been more favourable in their references to 'Forgiveness and Law'. Quotations to this effect have been made elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.³

1. Horace Bushnell - p.262.

2. Bushnell Centenary - p.34.

3. See Bruce - The Humiliation of Christ - pp.357-60.

Salmond - London Quarterly Review - Vol. 4, pp.311-2.

White - Forgiveness and Suffering - p.90.

Mackintosh - The Christian Experience of Forgiveness - pp.185-6.

(g) Influence on his own communion

Bushnell's influence has been felt in all the branches of the Protestant Church in English speaking countries. Naturally, his general influence has not often been acknowledged by individual communions; but his own church in America, at one time most critical of his views, has given it cordial recognition. The following quotation comes from the pen of Williston Walker - a writer who is well acquainted with his church's history. In an article, entitled 'Changes in Theology among American Congregationalists', he said:

"To Horace Bushnell, however, the chief preparation for the more modern development of Congregational theology is to be ascribed. his point of view has gained constantly increasing adhesion during the last half-century, until it has become widely characteristic of Congregationalism."¹

(h) Influence on individual men

In attempting to estimate the influence of Bushnell upon individual men, it is natural to begin with that upon his closest disciple and biographer - Theodore T. Munger. One has only to read his 'Horace Bushnell Preacher and Theologian' to realize that the relationship between the two was not only that of friend to friend but also that of disciple to master and that in a very deep degree. Not only is Munger indebted to Bushnell for his chief inspira-

1. American Journal of Theology, 1906, p.205.

tion, his guidance, and the cast and method of his theological thought, but Bushnell's influence may be said to have lived on in him. It has been claimed that he is "Bushnell's best expositor, for he represents his tendency in thought, and in fact comes as near as any living man could come to saying the things which Bushnell would be saying, had he lived to the close of the century."¹ While some may be inclined to doubt this last statement, it must be admitted that no finer tribute could be paid to the influence of Bushnell on Munger.

Phillips Brooks and Henry Ward Beecher owed much to Bushnell and in their turn helped to make his influence more widespread. The following quotation from the former's biography tells its own story:

"Taking the sonnets of Brooks as indications of his grateful recognition to those who contributed to his growth, mention should be made of Dr. Bushnell, to whom a sonnet is also addressed. No books in Brooks's library show signs of harder usage than Bushnell's 'Sermons for the New Life' and Maurice's 'Theological Essays'. In the decade of the fifties in the last century, no writers were exerting a stronger or a more beneficent effect upon theology".²

Washington Gladden, theologian and hymn writer,

1. C. F. Dole - New World, Vol. 8, p.699.

2. Phillips Brooks - Memories of his Life - A. V. G. Allen - p.66.

pays the following glowing tribute to Bushnell's influence upon himself:

"Of greater consequence, however, than these influences was the entrance into my life of Frederick W. Robertson and Horace Bushnell, - each of them through volumes of sermons which opened to me a new world. I can never tell how much I owe to these two men - to Robertson, first, for opening my eyes; to Bushnell, chiefly for teaching me how to use them."¹

And speaking of 'God in Christ', Gladden says: "In these three great discourses I found an emancipation which delivered me at once and forever from the bondage of an immoral theology".²

Other American theologians and preachers who may be mentioned as among those whom Bushnell influenced are: George A. Gordon who "entered with full appreciation"³ into the work for which Bushnell had laid the foundations; Henry M. Goodwin whose volume 'Christ and Humanity' (1875) is inscribed to Bushnell;⁴ Leonard Bacon from whose references to Bushnell quotation has already been made;⁵ Joseph

1. and 2. Washington Gladden's 'Recollections' - pp.118-9.

3. See J. W. Buckham - Progressive Religious Thought in America - p.88.

4. "To Horace Bushnell, my revered friend and teacher, whose profound and sanctified genius has made the world his debtor, and whose eminent services to Christianity in the reconciliation of faith and reason await the verdict of the future ages, these later studies of Christian doctrine are filially and affectionately inscribed by the author."

5. See p.246

P. Twitchell, Edwin P. Parker, and A. S. Chesebrough, all of whom read papers at the Bushnell Centenary - Chesebrough, one of the earliest to write in defence of Bushnell during "the days of accusation"; George B. Stevens who has many sympathetic references to Bushnell in his writings;¹ Nathaniel J. Burton who acknowledges that in the early years of his ministry he "had read his (Bushnell's) books and felt the impulse of his most quickening mind";² Newman Smyth,³ Lyman Abbott,⁴ and many others.

Acknowledgment of Bushnell's influence by British writers has been rather slow in appearing. Perhaps, it is to be expected that open acknowledgment of the influence of an American, comparatively unknown to the general public, is not likely to be made. It may be, too, that the following words of Douglas MacFadyen throw light on this as far as England is concerned. Speaking of Bushnell's ideas, he says that "they were introduced into English religious thought by Alexander MacKennal and Charles Berry, but, owing to want of sufficient theological training, the representatives of the monistic tradition have strayed into pantheism."⁵

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1. See - Christian Doctrine of Salvation - pp.243-7, 258, 353, American Journal of Theology, Vol. 6, p.50.
 2. Yale Lectures on Preaching - p.418.
 3. See Buckham - Progressive Religious Thought in America, p.273.
 4. See his 'Henry Ward Beecher' - p.10.
 5. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics - Vol. 3, p.46.

That many British writers have owed much to Bushnell cannot be denied. Burton, in an address at the unveiling of a memorial to Bushnell in 1878, referred to a letter which he had received from a "prominent clergyman of the Church of England". The correspondent "spoke of him (Bushnell) as his 'teacher and helper' and went on to remark on 'the vast and constantly increasing number of enthusiastic friends' whom he has in that country".¹ James Denney, in his posthumous volume, referred to "the numberless writers who have learned" from Bushnell.² He does not explicitly state it, but it may be inferred that many of those he had in mind were British writers. It is significant that in recent years a number of authors have made references to Bushnell's teaching in which they stressed the similarity between his view and the view they have expounded. The two following quotations, as well as a number of those already given, illustrate this fact. Douglas White, writing in 1913, referred to the first chapter of 'Forgiveness and Law' as follows: "I find in that chapter (not in the rest of the book) numerous and important points of contact with my own point of view; more so, I think, than in any other single work".³

1. Yale Lectures on Preaching - p.425.

2. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation - p.261.

3. Forgiveness and Suffering - p.90.

And William E. Wilson of the Selly Oak Colleges Birmingham wrote in 1929: "There is much said by both of them (Bushnell and Schleiermacher) that is closely in accordance with the view we have propounded."¹

It is difficult to say how far (if to any extent) Bushnell has influenced R. C. Moberly. There is no definite acknowledgment of the influence, although many feel that it is a real though perhaps an unconscious one. Certainly, Bushnell's influence on Moberly is not to be compared with that of McLeod Campbell. Yet it is significant that no other exponent of the "moral theory" since Bushnell's time has made so much of the idea of how real and bitter the "making cost" is for God.

1. The Problem of the Cross - p.319.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Bushnell's doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ reveals the theology of a religious genius rather than that of a systematic and formal theologian. Of those influences which helped to mould his thought, the following more important ones have been noted. His theological environment contributed indirectly, providing the background for his theology. He had certain deep religious experiences which made a profound impression on his thought. From other authors he received much less inspiration than is usually the case, but he was deeply indebted to Coleridge. In order to interpret the Scriptures, and to express his own ideas, he developed a theory of language which naturally moulded his own thought. Finally, his vocation as pastor and preacher coloured his thinking and the form of his theology in a way far from insignificant.

A typical man of his century, Bushnell was early attracted by the problems of Christology. His interest in such problems, however, did not continue throughout his life - rather, he became absorbed in the more practical, but closely related subject of the work of Christ. Bushnell approached Christology with a distorted idea of the danger of over-speculation on the subject, due, partly to his over-

whelming sense of God's presence, partly to his recoil from the current teaching, viz., the orthodox "two nature" theory, and the seemingly logical but utterly unsatisfactory theory of the Unitarians.

Bushnell's assertion and defence of the divinity of Christ deserves attention. Behind all his teaching on this subject lies the thought that the deepest reality about Christ consists in the fact that He is God. Christ's ethical and spiritual qualities are the strongest reasons for separating Him from men, and thus proving His divinity.

Bushnell attempts to treat the divinity of Christ in such a way as to do justice to the true organic unity of the divine-human Christ. There is, however, more than a little evidence to support the statement that he affirms Christ's divinity at the expense of His humanity. Certainly, he is not as clear and positive on this subject as we might have expected. Although some of his more formal works on Christology may be to a certain extent unsatisfactory, a number of his incidental conceptions are of considerable value. Often he penetrated to the heart of a subject; this is specially true of his references to the humanity of Christ in his sermons, and in his books on the atonement.

His teaching on the Trinity reveals a gradual development from a theory akin to modalism to a position not far removed from that of the Nicene creed. He made a distinct contribution to theology in his own day by protesting against

tritheistic thinking, and by stressing the historic side of the Trinity.

The subject of the atonement claimed Bushnell's attention to a greater degree than in the case of almost any other theologian. He may be said to be unique in that he passed through three different stages in his thought on this theme, each time publishing his results. The first, and to a lesser degree the last, have not received due attention from students of the atonement.

The first stage of his thought, expressed in 'God in Christ' and 'Christ in Theology', is admitted to be comparatively immature and narrow, yet important, in that it reveals his points of departure from current theories. His early teaching may be summed up in the statement that the work of Christ is operative wholly on man, but representatively on God in order to be more effective.

'The Vicarious Sacrifice' expresses the result of the second stage of Bushnell's thinking, in which he makes a fresh approach to the subject, treating it from a much wider point of view. At the basis of his theory is the idea that love is vicarious. From this he argues that there is nothing "superlative" in vicarious sacrifice - nothing above the universal principles of right and duty. Through His life and death, Christ becomes a renovating and saving power in men; He is God's power in healing the souls of mankind. This power is cumulative; Christ wins it through His life and death.

His saving work is related to God's law and justice. Salvation glorifies justice, and justice vindicates mercy. The law precept is duly sanctified; legal enforcements are not diminished; and God's rectoral honour is effectively maintained. One of the most curious parts of his book is the last chapter, in which he claims that although in his view the truth of the atonement is subjective, he considers that the preaching of the doctrine ought to be objective.

A few years after the publication of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice', Bushnell became dissatisfied with the latter half of it. Certain of his own sermons had helped him to find "fresh light", and he proceeded to write a third book on the subject - 'Forgiveness and Law'. As the title indicates, Bushnell approaches the subject from the point of view of forgiveness. In his own life he had probed deeply into this theme, and he had learned that to be real, forgiveness must be costly involving much sympathy and sacrifice. Not only may the wrong-doer be thus brought to a state of penitence by this "making cost", but the wronged party is himself propitiated; he is able to forgive whether the malignant person is willing or not to be forgiven. In the same way, Bushnell says, God forgives man while He Himself is propitiated by His "making cost" in the sacrifice of Christ.

A great deal may be said in appreciation of Bush-

nell's teaching on the atonement. 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' - especially the early part - has been acknowledged to be one of the finest books written on the subject. The theory as a whole is commendable for its high ethical and spiritual tone, its conception of God as Father, its emphasis on the vicariousness of love, its view of the atonement as closely related to the incarnation, its interpretation of the resurrection, and its excellent treatment of the manward side of the atonement.

In spite of these excellent features, the theory is deficient in some respects. There is no adequate explanation of the death of Christ, and the references to this subject are surprisingly few. At times the cross is treated as an anti-climax, and the atonement is placed in heaven rather than on Calvary. There is a tendency to make the work of Christ too commonplace. The inimitable features of Christ's work have not been stressed, and the impression is given that man deserves credit for a certain amount of goodness quite apart from Christ. Some of the minor deficiencies in Bushnell's theory consist in his treatment of Christ's sufferings, the social significance of His work, the problem of sin as related to God, the remission of sins, the Godward side of the atonement, and the attitude of God to penalty.

'Forgiveness and Law' has many of the merits of 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' without some of the demerits. The most important contribution of the book is the idea of the atonement

as the cost of forgiveness to God. The explanation of propitiation is more satisfactory than that given in his previous book. The treatment of the subject of forgiveness has many excellent features. On the other hand, the book may be criticized on the score of its excessive anthropomorphism, its failure to make clear the difference between God's forgiveness and man's, and its tendency - more pronounced than in 'The Vicarious Sacrifice' - to transfer the atonement from the cross on Calvary to God in heaven.

In conclusion, it may be said that Bushnell's doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ is an important contribution to theology. That he himself changed his mind often on the subjects under discussion does not make his contribution less valuable. It is a tribute both to himself and to the greatness of his theme, that, although his insight was ever deepening, his mind was ever eager for fresh light.

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